

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

HISTORY of WAR

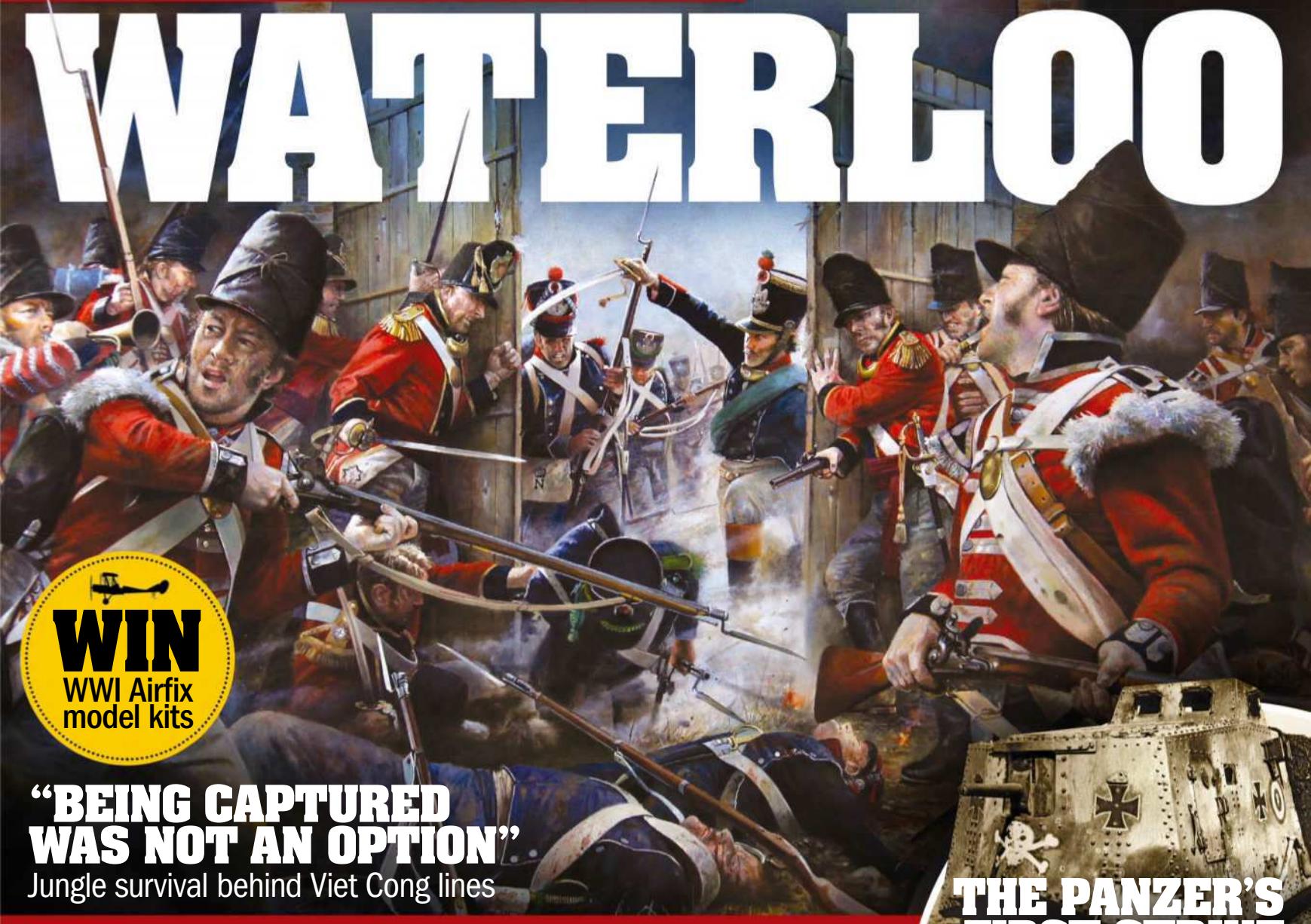


THE KAISER'S
FINAL OFFENSIVE

GATES TO VICTORY

WAS NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT
DECIDED AT HOUGOUMONT?

WATERLOO



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WWI Airfix
model kits

**"BEING CAPTURED
WAS NOT AN OPTION"**

Jungle survival behind Viet Cong lines



VALOR IN THE VOSGES

Medal of Honor hero
Major Charles L. Thomas

ENDGAME AT YORKTOWN

The blunders behind Britain's
Revolutionary War defeat

BLOODSHED ON THE BOYNE

From 17th-century struggle
to sectarian flashpoint

THE PANZER'S FIRST STRIKE

Why Germany's A7V failed
to match Britain's tanks

KING & COUNTRY'S

1944-45

GERMANY LIES IN RUINS...

The writing is on the wall and the Nazi beast, though still seriously wounded, is very, very dangerous...



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Welcome

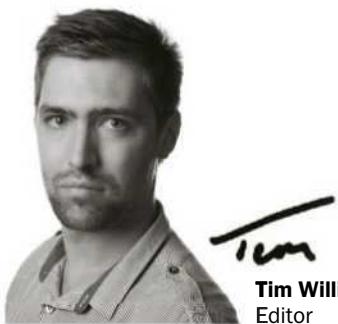
“The success of the battle of Waterloo turned upon the closing of the gates of Hougoumont”

– Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington

On 18 June 1815, a small, rain-soaked patch of countryside near Brussels erupted with cannon fire, musket shot and the thunder of cavalry. In the two centuries since Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, veterans of the battle, as well as historians around the world, have evaluated where precisely the day was won and lost.

This issue, Dr Bernard Wilkin explores Wellington's claim that the battle hinged on the fight for Hougoumont. The garrison mounted a desperate defence throughout the day and famously managed to halt a forceful French assault by shutting the

courtyard's gates. However, have centuries of military mythology overstated the significance of this compelling story?



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TOM GARNER

This month Tom spoke with Colonel Vic Vizcarra, who flew F-105 'Thud' jets during the Vietnam War. He reveals how he avoided capture after bailing out over enemy lines (p. 60). Also, for this issue's Frontline Tom explores the Nine Years' War (p. 14).



DR BERNARD WILKIN

Bernard is a Belgian historian and lecturer, as well as the author of two books, *Fighting The British* and *Fighting For Napoleon*. On page 26, he and his father René explore the action around Hougoumont at the Battle of Waterloo.



PROF. WILLIAM PHILPOTT

Professor Philpott of King's College London concludes his series on the Spring Offensive in this final instalment, relating how Ferdinand Foch rallied the Allied defences and turned the tables on a weakened German army (p. 38).



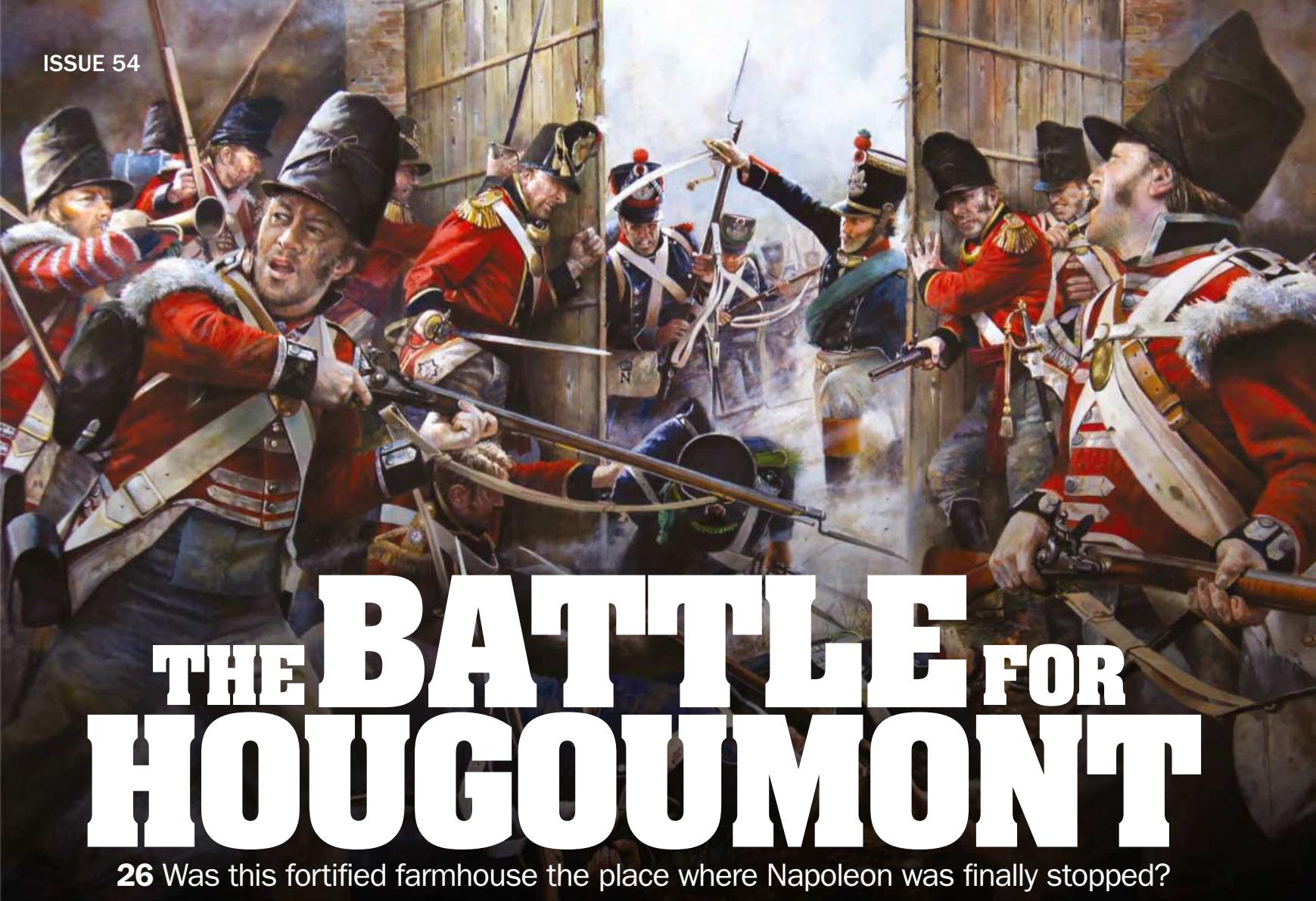
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The Lion's Mound overlooking the battlefield of Waterloo. Historians have long-debated which critical moment of the battle led to Napoleon's defeat



THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOUMONT

26 Was this fortified farmhouse the place where Napoleon was finally stopped?

Frontline

14 War of the Grand Alliance

The newly crowned William III draws England into his ongoing campaigns against France

16 War in the New World

Across the Atlantic Ocean the North American colonies became battlegrounds

18 Second Siege of Namur

A heavily fortified French garrison attempts to survive against a powerful coalition army

20 Kings, marshals & governors

Europe's statesmen and military talents were pitted against one another

22 The Boyne's troubled legacy

William III's victory still reverberates today

24 In the ranks

With greater firepower than ever, these 17th-century armies were professional and deadly

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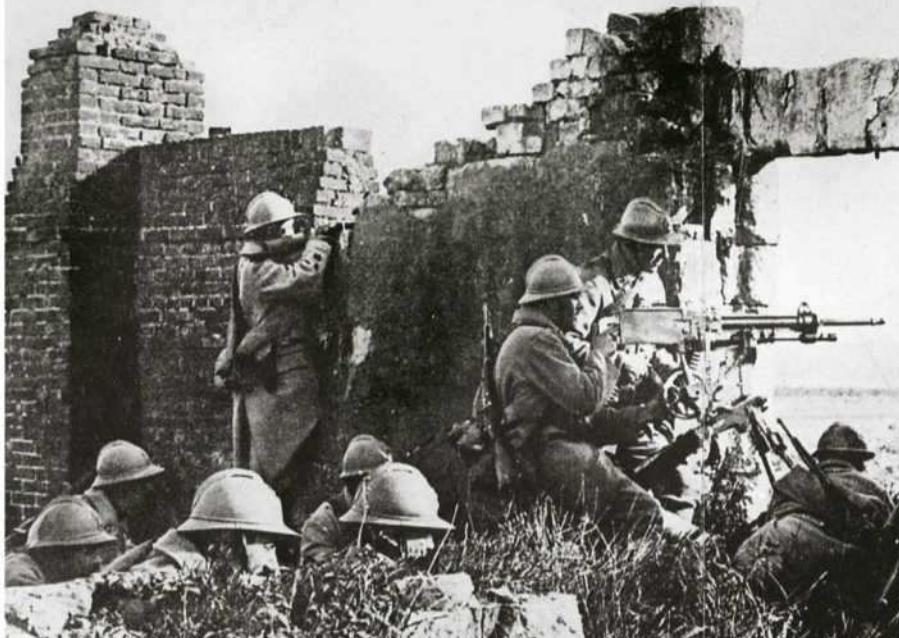
58 Never miss an issue, get History Of War before it's available in the shops and save a bundle while you're at it

1918

THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

PART III

38 In the final part of his series, Prof. William Philpott explores how Ferdinand Foch's genius strategy paid off



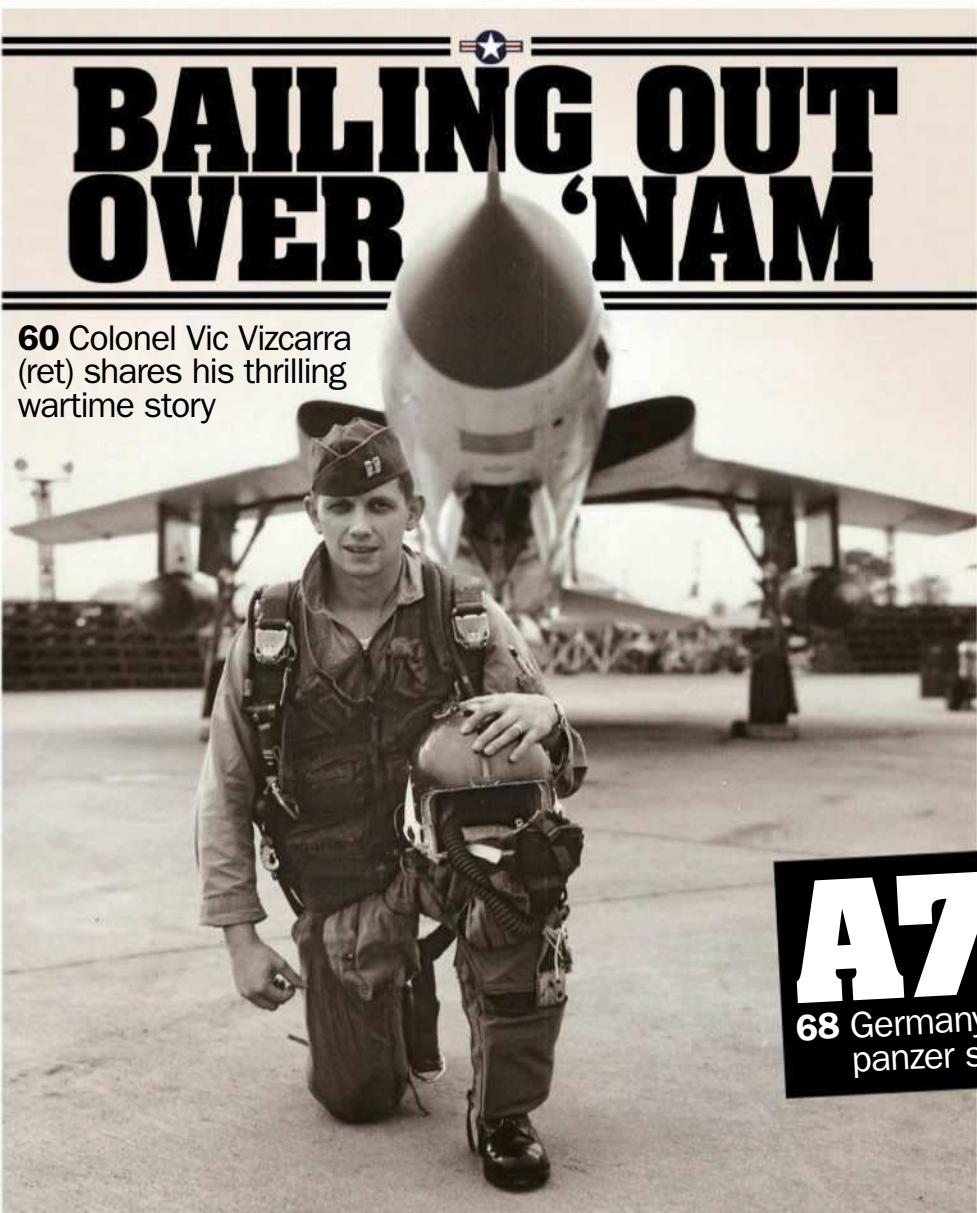
SIEGE of YORKTOWN

74 A British army faced humiliating defeat on the American continent, but was it inevitable?



BAILING OUT OVER 'NAM

60 Colonel Vic Vizcarra (ret) shares his thrilling wartime story



A7V
68 Germany's first panzer strikes

06 WAR IN FOCUS

Stunning imagery from throughout history

26 The battle for Hougoumont

Dr Bernard and René Wilkin explore the tough defence of Wellington's flank

38 1918 Spring Offensive: Part III

How Ferdinand Foch's strategic gamble pushed the Germans back at the Marne

46 MEDAL OF HONOR HEROES

Charles L. Thomas

An anti-tank officer leads his unit against the odds in 1944 France

50 Serbia's bloodyminded 1914: Part III

As winter sets in, the Austro-Hungarian campaign comes to a brutal end

60 Bailing out over 'Nam

Veteran pilot Vic Vizcarra reveals his ordeal behind enemy lines in Vietnam

68 OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK Sturmpanzerwagen A7V

Take a look inside Germany's first panzer

74 GREAT BATTLES

Siege of Yorktown

A British army is cornered and besieged by a Franco-American coalition

82 The Third Reich in photos: The interim years

Paul Garson shares rare and unseen glimpses into pre-war Germany

88 OPINION

Graves in the Falklands

The final resting places of many Argentinian soldiers remain unidentified

91 COMPETITION

WWI Airfix models

Win a Fokker E.II Eindecker and Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c night fighter

92 Reviews

A round up of the latest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

98 ARTEFACT OF WAR

Hitler's switchboard

This unusual telephone exchange was housed in the 'Wolf's Lair'





WAR in FOCUS

“BUONA PASQUA!”

Taken: Spring 1916

Italian gunners stationed in the Alps load artillery pieces with holiday-themed shells, to be fired at Austrian positions. Italy's frontline with Austria-Hungary was mostly over mountainous terrain, meaning troops faced terrible conditions, while artillery had to be laboriously dragged to high altitudes. Several battles were fought along the Isonzo River, running from the Julian Alps.



WAR in FOCUS

FAR-RIGHT FIGHTERS

Taken: May 1939

Two soldiers of Germany's Condor Legion (far right and third right) pose with colonial Regulares from a Moroccan unit, one of whom holds up a flag. The group is pictured at a military camp prior to the Legion's departure from Spain, after fighting alongside Franco's Nationalist forces and helping them claim victory in the country's bitter and brutal civil war.









WAR
in
FOCUS
WARSAW AFLAME

Taken: c. April-May 1943

SS soldiers patrol Nowolipie street during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the spring of 1943. Polish underground resistance troops began fighting back against German soldiers, who had begun deporting the city's Jewish population to concentration camps. Although outnumbered and outgunned, Jewish resistance fighters battled for nearly a month.



WAR in FOCUS KOSOVO FORCE

Taken: 12 June 1999

British NATO soldiers wait in their Warrior light tank near to the Macedonian-Yugoslav border, as part of the KFOR (Kosovo Force), which was tasked with ending the humanitarian crisis that was raging in Kosovo at the time. Dozens of countries from both within and outside of NATO contributed to the operations, which effectively brought an end to the Kosovo War.



TIMELINE OF THE...

WAR OF THE GRAND ALLIANCE

Otherwise known as the Nine Years' War, this conflict saw a coalition of European powers fight the hegemony of Louis XIV of France between 1688-97

REVOLUTIONS & INVASIONS

1688 sees Prince William of Orange successfully overthrow James II of England and establish himself as king. At the same time William's archenemy, Louis XIV of France, invades the Rhineland and a 'Grand Alliance' is formed in 1689 against the French that includes England, the Dutch Republic, Austria, Spain and Savoy.



William III landing at Brixham, Devon, on 5 November 1688. England's only Dutch king famously declared, "The liberties of England and the Protestant religion I will maintain"

KING WILLIAM'S WAR

Away from the European theatre, an Anglo-French war is fought in North America with assistance from Native American allies. Fighting occurs on the northern coast and the Hudson and St Lawrence valleys, with an attack on Port Royal and an inter-colonial war in Quebec. The Treaty of Ryswick concludes the conflict.



Comte Frontenac rebuffs English demands to surrender during the Battle of Quebec in 1690, declaring, "I have no reply to make to your general other than from the mouth of my cannons and muskets"

BATTLE OF THE BOYNE

William III defeats a Jacobite army raised by James II in Ireland. Backed by Louis XIV, James's failed campaign ends hopes for a Catholic restoration in England. Despite being a relatively small battle, the Boyne has a troubled legacy in Ireland that resonates into the 21st century.

1 July 1690

10 July 1690

BATTLE OF BEACHY HEAD

The French win a great tactical naval victory against an Anglo-Dutch fleet off Beachy Head in the English Channel. Around a dozen Allied ships are lost, but the French (who suffer no ships lost) fail to capitalise on their victory.

The defeated English admiral, the earl of Torrington, had advised against engaging the French, but Queen Mary II had overruled him. He was subsequently dismissed from the Royal Navy



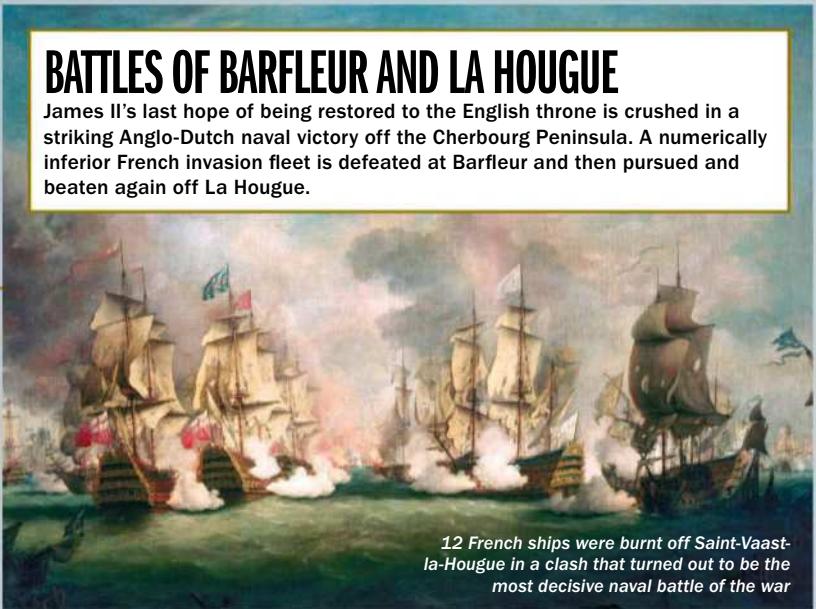


25 May-30 June 1692 and 2 July-4 September 1695

SIEGES OF NAMUR

Louis XIV conquers large parts of Belgium during the war and aims to defend French gains by building 90 fortresses. One of the fortresses at Namur is subjected to two sieges, and the latter is the scene of one of William III's greatest military successes during the war.

The First Siege of Namur was a French victory and one of the few occasions when Louis XIV took personal command of his army



29 May-4 June 1692

29 July 1693

20 September 1697



TREATY OF RYSWICK

The war is concluded at Ryswick and includes major French concessions. Louis XIV officially recognises William III as king of England and relinquishes his control over the Rhineland and Lorraine. He also restores Luxembourg, Mons, Courtrai and Barcelona to Spain, while the Dutch build fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands as a barrier against France.

Images: Getty

WAR IN THE NEW WORLD

English and French settlers, along with Native American allies, turned the European war into a global conflict in North America with a series of savage battles, raids and massacres



1 BATTLE OF FALMOUTH

FORT LOYAL, PORTLAND, MAINE

16-20 May 1690

French and Native American allies capture Fort Loyal and Falmouth in a three-pronged attack against English settlements. There is a three-day siege at Fort Loyal, before approximately 200 English soldiers and settlers are murdered after a false promise of safe passage following their surrender.

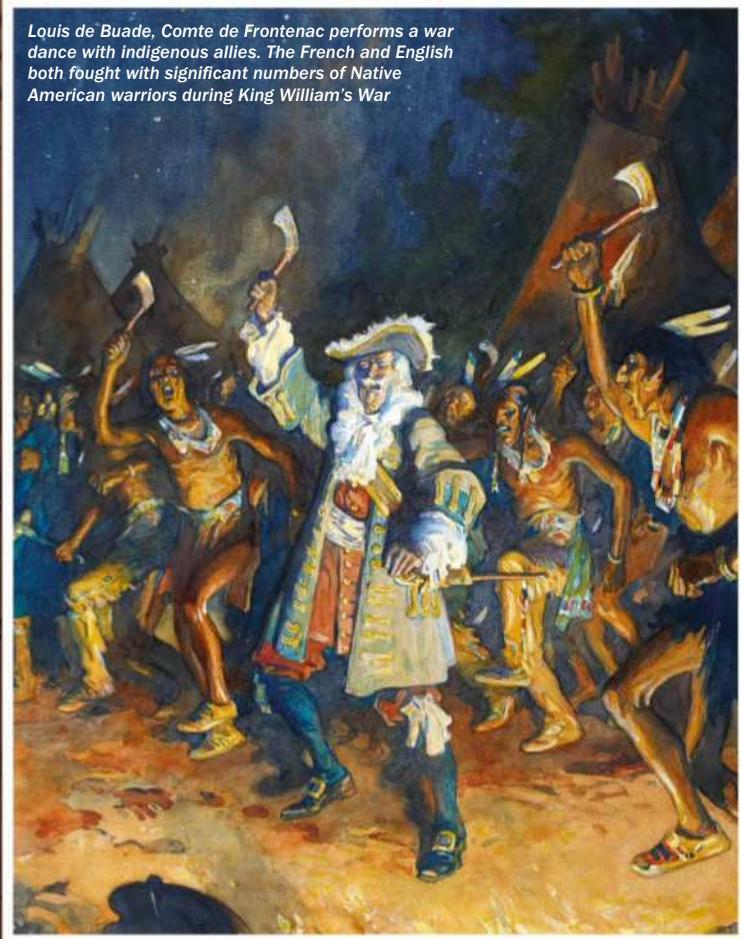
2 BATTLE OF PORT ROYAL

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, NOVA SCOTIA

19 May 1690

An English colonial force led by Sir William Phips surprises the French at their fortress at Port Royal. Using seven warships and an army largely composed of Massachusetts militiamen, the French garrison is forced to surrender. Phips's men then plunder the settlement and leave behind an unpopular puppet government.

Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac performs a war dance with indigenous allies. The French and English both fought with significant numbers of Native American warriors during King William's War



8

CAPTURE OF YORK FACTORY

YORK FACTORY, MANITOBA

14 OCTOBER 1694

FIRST BATTLE OF FORT ALBANY

FORT ALBANY, ONTARIO

SEPTEMBER 1688

SECOND BATTLE OF FORT ALBANY

FORT ALBANY, ONTARIO

1693

3 BATTLE OF CHEDABUCTO

GUYSBOROUGH, NOVA SCOTIA

3 June 1690

Sir William Phips sends Captain Cyprian Southack to Chedabucto with 80 men to destroy Fort St Louis and the surrounding French fishery. The fort holds out for six hours and is destroyed by firebombs. The English subsequently destroy large amounts of fish.

4 BATTLE OF QUEBEC

QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

16-24 October 1690

Sir William Phips attacks Quebec City in a naval expedition from Boston. Comte Frontenac, the governor of New France, refuses to surrender to Phips and the result is a French victory. The retreating Phips then loses several ships in storms on the return voyage.

5 BATTLE OF LA PRAIRIE

LA PRAIRIE, QUEBEC

11 August 1691

Major Peter Schuyler leads several hundred English colonists and Mohawk warriors in an attack on the French settlement of La Prairie. The French suffer heavy losses, but their determined fighting repulses the English.

6 CANDLEMAS MASSACRE

YORK, MAINE

24 January 1692

A French and Wabanaki war party travels through snow to the settlement of York and kills or captures 150 people, mostly English settlers. An English pastor is moved to write, "God is manifesting his displeasure against this Land."



7 BATTLE OF FUNDY BAY

OFF SAINT JOHN, BAY OF FUNDY, NEW BRUNSWICK

14 July 1696

A sharp battle is fought in the Bay of Fundy between two English and two French warships. One of the English vessels loses its mast and is captured, while the other escapes the French in a fog.

Right: The French warship Pélican sinks following the Battle of Hudson's Bay. Despite the loss of their ship, the French crew had achieved the greatest naval victory in New France's history



Above: Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville was a successful French sailor and soldier, who led numerous raids and campaigns against the English and won several small naval battles

"GOD IS MANIFESTING HIS DISPLEASURE AGAINST THIS LAND"

SIEGE OF FORT NASHWAAK

FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK

18-20 OCTOBER 1696

8 BATTLE OF HUDSON'S BAY

OFF YORK FACTORY, HUDSON'S BAY, MANITOBA

5 September 1697

A single French warship commanded by Captain Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville sinks two English warships and damages a third in Hudson's Bay. D'Iberville eventually has to abandon his ship but immediately proceeds to capture the valuable trading station at York Factory with his crew.

LACHINE MASSACRE

LACHINE, MONTREAL, QUEBEC
5 AUGUST 1689

FIRST SIEGE OF PEMAQUID

BRISTOL, MAINE
2-3 AUGUST 1689

RAID ON GROTON

GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS
27 JULY 1694

MOHAWK VALLEY RAID

MOHAWK RIVER VALLEY
FEBRUARY 1692

RAID ON OYSTER RIVER

DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
18 JULY 1694

SCHENECTADY MASSACRE

SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK
8 FEBRUARY 1690

SECOND SIEGE OF PEMAQUID

BRISTOL, MAINE
14-15 AUGUST 1696

RAID ON SALMON FALLS

BERWICK, MAINE
27 MARCH 1690

RAID ON WELLS

WELLS, MAINE
10-13 JUNE 1692

RAID ON HAVERHILL

HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS
15 MARCH 1697

RAID ON DOVER

DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE
27-28 JUNE 1698

AVALON PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

AVALON PENINSULA, NEWFOUNDLAND
10 NOVEMBER 1696-19 APRIL 1697

Below: A French and Native American force conducted a violent night-time raid against the residents of Schenectady on 8 February 1690



— FAMOUS BATTLE —

SECOND SIEGE OF NAMUR 1695

This bloody encounter saw William III's greatest victory on the European continent, against a heavily entrenched French garrison

Although William III was king of England, Scotland and Ireland, he had also been prince of Orange from birth and was the stadholder (steward) of the majority of provinces within the Dutch Republic. His Dutch identity and territories were therefore at the heart of his fighting policies against Louis XIV, and Belgium (then known as the Spanish Netherlands) became a key buffer zone between the two kings' forces.

The city of Namur lies on the confluence of the rivers Meuse and Sambre southwest of Brussels. It was a key position in the Spanish Netherlands, and both William and

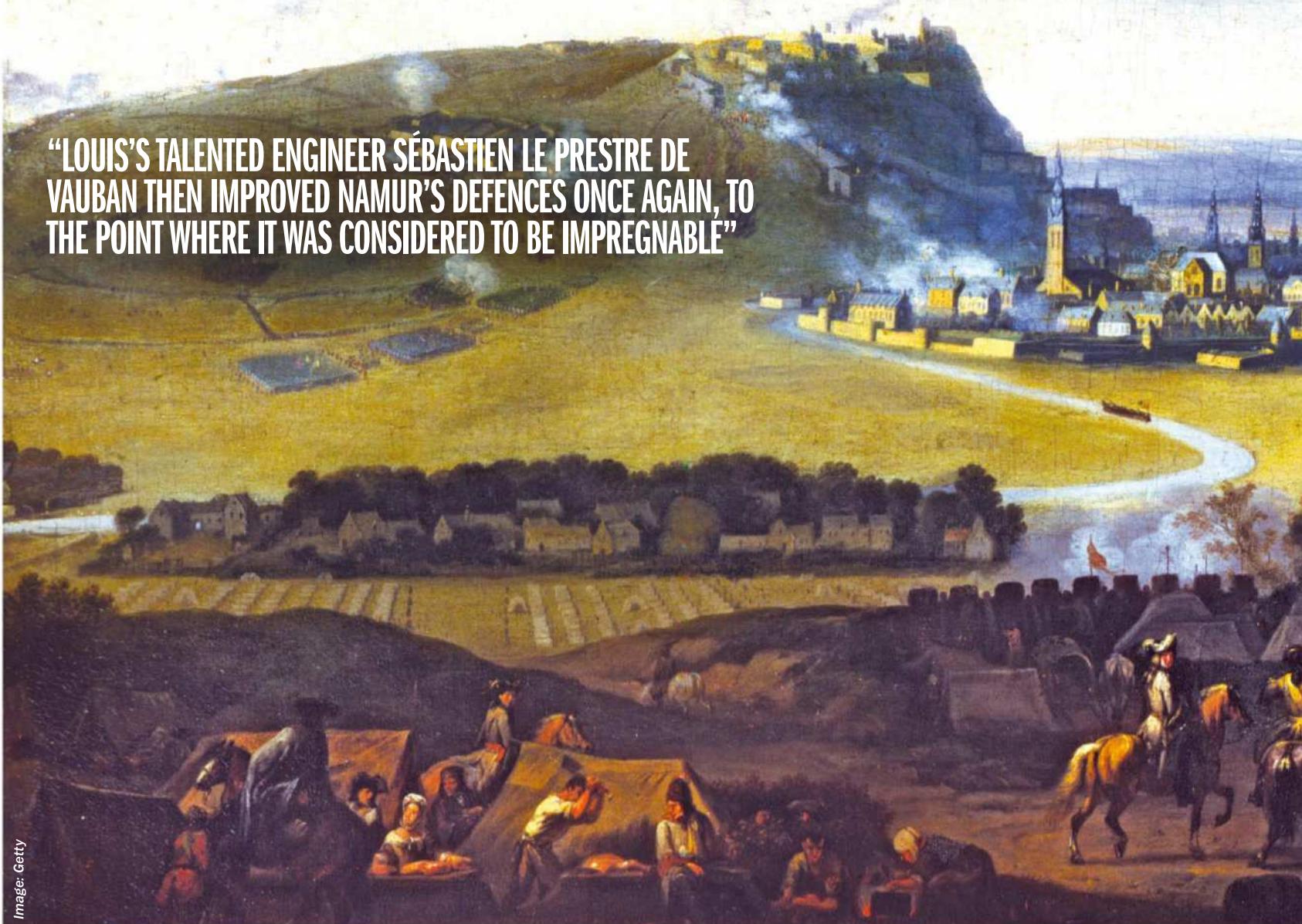
Louis XIV knew its strategic importance. The Dutch engineer Menno van Coehoorn had considerably strengthened Namur's fortifications, and it was known to be a very strong citadel. Nonetheless, the French (under the rare personal command of Louis XIV) had besieged and taken the city in only 27 days in 1692.

Louis's talented engineer Sébastien le Prestre de Vauban improved Namur's defences once again, to the point where it was considered to be impregnable. Vauban's defences included a strong bastioned trace around the city, which was dominated by the citadel that stood on a hill.

Defences and destructive diversions

By 1695 France was on the defensive, and an Allied army of 80,000 English, Dutch, Scots, Irish and Holy Roman Empire troops laid siege to Namur from 2 July 1695 under the command of William III and the electors of Bavaria and Brandenburg. A 13,000-strong French garrison commanded by Louis-François, Duc de Boufflers, opposed the Allies. This large garrison meant that the French could mount sorties against their attackers, but Coehoorn, who now had to destroy much of his own fortifications, led the Allied siege works.

“LOUIS’S TALENTED ENGINEER SÉBASTIEN LE PRESTRE DE VAUBAN THEN IMPROVED NAMUR’S DEFENCES ONCE AGAIN, TO THE POINT WHERE IT WAS CONSIDERED TO BE IMPREGNABLE”



Systems of trenches were dug around the city, and the garrison surrendered the town after 14 days, before retreating into the citadel. Coehoorn constructed batteries from inside of Namur to bombard the lower defences of the citadel. There was also intensive sapping, but Boufflers dug his own trenches to protect the defenders, which resulted in bloody Allied assaults. Boufflers's defences were so effective that the first Allied attack on the citadel was forced to retreat with heavy losses. A second attack did push the French out of the lower defences, but the citadel was not taken.

Meanwhile, François, Duc de Villeroy, attempted to draw the allies away from Namur by bombarding Brussels between 13-15 August 1695. The Belgian capital was militarily unimportant, and the artillery assault only succeeded in causing great destruction to the city. William and his commanders did not take the bait to divert any of their soldiers from Namur, and the siege continued unabated.

Allied attacks on the citadel were now beginning to be successful but at great cost, including at St Nicholas Gate, where 800 Allied soldiers were killed in one assault. The northern approach to the French defences was called Fort William, and the Allies managed to take its first line of defence and then breached its main walls. The fort was ultimately taken,

but there were once again heavy casualties on both sides.

An early 'British Army' victory

The Allies were now close to the inner citadel, and more batteries were established to pound part of the southern defences known as the 'hornwork'. English and Scottish troops managed to breach the hornwork and an Irish regiment successfully stormed the citadel. As a reward, William III officially named the regiment as the 'Royal Regiment of Ireland'.

The garrison was now forced back into the medieval castle, which was the highest point of the citadel, and the French finally surrendered on 4 September 1695. Boufflers had lost 8,000 men out of his 13,000-strong garrison, but the Allies suffered more, with over 12,000 casualties. William subsequently detained Boufflers for his conduct in treating Allied prisoners of war poorly after previous battles.

Namur was arguably William's greatest (if extremely bloody) victory. 14 English and Scottish regiments participated, including the Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Guards, and it became one of the earliest actions to be commemorated on British Army colours. Nevertheless, the regiments that fought at the siege did not receive 'Namur' as a battle honour until centuries later, in 1910.

The Siege of Namur as depicted by Jan van Huchtenburg. William III can be seen in the foreground dressed in grey while conferring with Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria



UNEXPECTED CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES

ALTHOUGH FORGOTTEN TODAY, THE SIEGE OF NAMUR INSPIRED MEMORABLE WORKS OF MUSIC AND LITERATURE

The late 17th century is a relatively forgotten period in British history, but William III's victory at Namur was an inspiration for the traditional marching song *The British Grenadiers* and Laurence Sterne's classic 18th-century novel *Tristram Shandy*.

The British Grenadiers has been a ceremonial marching song of the British Army since the early 1700s and is often used in historical films and television programs. It is believed that the Siege of Namur inspired the song, and its verses suggest intense siege warfare: "When e'er we are commanded to storm the palisades/Our leaders march with fuses, and we with hand grenades... And when the siege is over, we to the town repair/The townsmen cry 'Hurrah boys, here comes a Grenadier'."

By contrast, *Tristram Shandy* specifically references Namur, and it forms a key part of the back-story of one of the novel's major characters. 'Captain Toby Shandy' is the protagonist's retired uncle and a veteran of Namur. It is revealed that Toby was wounded in the groin at the siege, but he retains a keen interest in its history and even builds a complete replica of the battle in his garden with his servant and fellow veteran Corporal Trim. Toby's reminiscences about Namur are so vivid that a re-enactment of the siege was included in the 2006 film *A Cock and Bull Story*, which was a comic adaptation of the novel.

Uncle Toby recounts the Siege of Namur to Widow Wadman in 'Tristram Shandy'. Wadman hesitates to marry Toby in the novel until she knows the extent of his groin wound from Namur



KINGS, MARSHALS & GOVERNORS

The commanders of the War of the Grand Alliance included kings, colonial politicians, talented engineers and a hunchback

WILLIAM III

THE POWERFUL SOLDIER-KING WHO OVERTHREW JAMES II AND FOUGHT LOUIS XIV
1650-1702 ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, IRELAND AND DUTCH REPUBLIC

William III was the decisive figure during the War of the Grand Alliance, which in many ways was his own personal crusade against Louis XIV of France. Born as the prince of Orange, William was Dutch by upbringing and identity. He came to prominence in 1672 when he was appointed to command the Dutch federal army against a French invasion. His successes led him to develop a lifelong obsession to save the Dutch from Louis XIV's expansionist policies. He managed to drive the French from Dutch soil, but his ambitions went further.

As a staunch Protestant, William was effectively invited to invade England by the English Parliament to overthrow his Catholic father-in-law James II in 1688. The invasion (which became known as the 'Glorious Revolution') was successful and

the Dutch prince became king in a unique political marriage and reign with James's daughter Mary II. William also automatically became king of Scotland and Ireland, and he used his new power as the monarch of three kingdoms to further his war against Louis.

The Glorious Revolution was one of the indirect matches that sparked the 1688-97 war. A coalition of the three British kingdoms, Austria, Spain and the Dutch Republic gathered to fight the French, but Louis XIV deployed the exiled James II to Ireland in 1689 to undermine William's rule. The conflict in Ireland was a sideshow for William, but it resulted in his most remembered victory at the Boyne in 1690. Once James was finally defeated, William personally led Allied forces in the Spanish Netherlands. Although he was sometimes defeated, William achieved great victories, including at the Siege of Namur in 1695.

Although he could never totally defeat France, William's successes forced Louis XIV to negotiate on unfavourable terms at the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. The treaty ended the war and was a personal success for William, who obtained military security for the Dutch and was officially recognised as king of England, Scotland and Ireland by Louis.



William III reputedly died after his horse threw him as it stumbled over a molehill in 1702. His enemies would later toast the mole as the 'little gentleman in black velvet'

JAMES II

THE LAST STUART KING, WHO FAILED TO REGAIN HIS BRITISH THRONES IN IRELAND 1633-1701 ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

James had first seen combat aged only nine when he was present at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642 at the beginning of the British Civil Wars. He then went on to command the Royal Navy during the Second and Third Dutch Wars under his brother Charles II.

When he became king in 1685, James expanded the size of his armies, but the Protestant William of Orange deposed him only three years later because of his pro-Catholic policies. James's deposition indirectly started the War of the Grand Alliance,

but the exiled king was determined to reclaim his thrones.

With the support of Louis XIV, James landed in Ireland in 1689 and garnered Irish Catholic support for his restoration. James besieged Protestant Derry, but William III successfully relieved the city. In July 1690 the armies of James and William clashed at the Battle of the Boyne, which resulted in a victory for William. Although the battle was not decisive, the defeat broke James's nerve and he quickly fled back to France, never to return.



"JAMES'S DEPOSITION INDIRECTLY STARTED THE WAR OF THE GRAND ALLIANCE, BUT THE EXILED KING WAS DETERMINED TO RECLAIM HIS THRONES"

SIR WILLIAM PHIPS

THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS, WHO COMMANDED ENGLISH COLONISTS DURING KING WILLIAM'S WAR 1651-95 ENGLAND

Born in a remote trading village in Maine, Phips became a sea captain and used treasure salvaged from a Spanish shipwreck to curry favour with the English crown. Knighted by James II in 1687, Phips was commissioned as a major general and played a leading role in the fight against the French during King William's War, despite having no military background.

Phips had an initial victory when he captured Port Royal in Nova Scotia with seven warships in May 1690 but had less success when he launched an ambitious campaign against Quebec. Commanding over 2,000 militiamen and approximately 30 ships, Phips dropped anchor at Quebec in October 1690, but the French were expecting him. A failed landing force and Phips's own naval bombardment achieved little, and the English colonists were forced to return to Boston.

Despite his defeat at Quebec, Phips became the first royal governor of colonial Massachusetts in 1692 and continued to oversee the war, which reduced to small attacks and frontier massacres until peace was declared in 1697.



Phips is perhaps most famous for establishing and disbanding the court that presided over the Salem Witch Trials of 1692

LOUIS XIV

THE 'SUN KING', WHOSE AGGRESSIVE EXPANSIONISM REPelled EUROPE 1638-1715 FRANCE

Louis XIV's claims to parts of the Spanish Netherlands led to war with the Dutch, and he made a bitter enemy out of William of Orange. William's assumption of the British thrones in 1688 was partially intended as a foundation stone to build military support against France, and war shortly followed when Louis invaded the Rhineland.

Although Louis mostly left campaigning to his generals, he did personally supervise French victories at the sieges of Mons (1691) and Namur (1692). His armies were also successful on land and at sea, but the Allies could not be easily defeated and he began to show a poor lack of judgement. His most notorious mistake was ordering



Napoleon Bonaparte once wrote that Louis XIV's bombardment of Brussels in 1695 had been "as barbarous as it was useless"

the shelling of Brussels in order to distract William III from the Second Siege of Namur in 1695. Over 4,200 shells and incendiary bombs destroyed one-third of Brussels, but the Allies did not take the bait. Louis was subsequently forced to negotiate with William III in 1697, and in the following War of the Spanish Succession his armies began to consistently lose battles.

SÉBASTIEN LE PRESTRE, MARQUIS DE VAUBAN

THE INFLUENTIAL MILITARY ENGINEER WHO REDEFINED SIEGE WARFARE 1633-1707 FRANCE

Born into a minor noble family in Burgundy, Vauban walked to join the regiment of the Grand Condé of France aged 17. His engineering skills were recognised, and Vauban began a long career directing sieges for Louis XIV and constructed highly advanced fortifications.

The War of the Grand Alliance was only one of several fruitful periods in Vauban's military career, but it included several innovations. Promoted to lieutenant general in 1688, Vauban introduced ricochet gunfire that allowed a cannonball to bounce over parapets and hit several objects before its force was spent. He also invented and advocated the use of the socket bayonet, which did not need to be removed when firing a musket.

Vauban's victories included the Siege of Mons and the first Siege of Namur in the presence of Louis XIV, and he commanded an infantry division at the Siege of Charleroi. The prodigious engineer concluded the war with his siege 'masterpiece' victory at Ath in 1697.



Vauban's 12 groups of fortified buildings and sites along the coast and borders of France are now listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites

FRANÇOIS-HENRI DE MONTMORENCY-BOUTEVILLE, DUC DE LUXEMBOURG

THE TALENTED, HUNCHBACKED MARSHAL WHO FREQUENTLY DEFEATED WILLIAM III 1628-95 FRANCE

Despite being physically weak and a hunchback, François-Henri de Montmorency-Bouteville was one of Louis XIV's most successful generals. Bouteville was a protégé of the famous general Louis, Grand Condé and became duc de Luxembourg after marrying an heiress. Luxembourg made his name fighting against the Dutch Republic in the 1670s, most notably against William of Orange, who became his battlefield nemesis. He was made a marshal of France in 1675 and became commander-in-chief of Louis XIV's royal armies in 1689.

Over the next few years Luxembourg won many victories and consistently outmanoeuvred William III on the continent. He thwarted an invasion of France at the Battle of Fleurus,



In the late 1670s Louis XIV imprisoned Luxembourg on a charge of sorcery for 14 months during a criminal case known as the 'Affair of the Poisons'

PRINCE GEORG FRIEDRICH OF WALDECK

THE FREELANCE SOLDIER WHO COMMANDED THE ALLIED CONTINENTAL ARMY 1620-92 DUTCH REPUBLIC

Waldeck was a Hessian German who served several European masters during his military career. At various times he fought for and served Brandenburg, Sweden, Bavaria and Lorraine, but his main allegiance was to the Dutch. Waldeck had started his military career in the service of the States-General of the Netherlands in 1641 and returned to serving a Dutch master when he was appointed as the field marshal of William III's forces in the Spanish Netherlands from 1688.

Under Waldeck's command the Allies achieved a battlefield victory at Walcourt, south of Charleroi in Belgium. Waldeck led a primarily Spanish-German force (with an English contingent led by John Churchill, Earl of Marlborough) against the French. Waldeck's victory was the only significant engagement of the 1689 campaign, but it would turn out to be the high point of his career. He suffered two defeats against the duc de Luxembourg at the battles of Fleurus and Leuze between 1690-91 and was transferred to become chief-of-staff of the Dutch States Army until his death.



Waldeck was Hessian, but he fought on a freelance basis for several Protestant forces

THE BOYNE'S TROUBLED LEGACY

William III's victory against James II in 1690 has become a toxic byword for sectarian tensions and violence that still exist in Northern Ireland today

No other battle from the War of the Grand Alliance has such an emotive and controversial reputation today than the Boyne. One historian wrote in 2000 that William III's victory was "a minor military triumph, but a landmark in British affairs as well as a continuing landmine in Irish history."

This is a remarkable statement to make about a battle that was fought over 300 years ago. The Boyne permanently changed the course of Irish and even British history, and the Protestant victory is revered and annually celebrated by the Orange Order, which still provokes problems and unrest in Northern Ireland today.

A European battle fought in Ireland

Contrary to popular perceptions, the Boyne was far from being an almost exclusive clash between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The battle, which was fought across the River Boyne just north of Dublin on 1 July 1690, contained multinational armies and was a personal fight between William III and the deposed James II for the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland. It was the largest battle in Irish history but played second fiddle to the greater geopolitical struggle in Europe.

William's 36,000-strong army only had small numbers of Protestant Ulstermen and Englishmen, with the vast majority of his troops being Dutch, Danish, German or French Huguenot. James's infantrymen were Irish Catholics, but they were poorly armed and considered inferior in quality to the elite contingent of French cavalry. In a confusing twist, although James's army was staunchly Catholic, Pope Alexander VIII was actually part of William's 'Grand Alliance' against Louis XIV and supported his re-conquest of Ireland.

James fled from Ireland after the battle and, although there was a more decisive battle at Aughrim on 12 July 1690, it was the Boyne that ended James's hopes of a restoration. William had secured his thrones and accepted the

Irish Protestant soldiers only formed a small part of William III's army at the Battle of the Boyne, with the majority of his troops being drawn from across continental Europe

A loyalist reveller prepares to burn an Irish tricolour on a bonfire during 'the Twelfth' commemorations, 12 July 2017. Religious sectarian problems still plague Northern Ireland



"CONTRARY TO POPULAR PERCEPTIONS THE BOYNE WAS FAR FROM BEING AN ALMOST EXCLUSIVE CLASH BETWEEN IRISH CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS"

supremacy of the English parliament, which had profound consequences for British history.

Nevertheless, it was in Ireland that the Boyne's legacy had the most impact. The collapse of Irish Catholic resistance to William cemented Protestant rule in Ireland that became known as the 'Ascendancy'. The descendants of the Anglo-Scottish 'plantation' in Ulster particularly benefited from William's victory and their survival was secured, which led to a fiercely Protestant identity.

The Orange Order

The 'Loyal Orange Institution' was established 105 years later in 1795 as a Protestant brotherhood. More commonly known as the 'Orange Order', this fraternal organisation was founded to secure the Ascendancy and named in tribute to William III. The Orange Order's power grew in Ulster, and by the 20th century every prime minister of Northern Ireland between 1921-72 was an Orangeman.

With their distinctive ceremonial sashes, bowler hats and banners, Orangemen are conservative British unionists who have 'lodges' across the world, but they are primarily based in Northern Ireland. As a religious fraternity, the order's function is to "defend Protestantism" and, although it claims that it "does not foster resentment and intolerance", accusations of anti-Catholic activities have arguably defined the order's image.

During recent decades, particularly during the 'Troubles' of 1968-98, the Orange Order was criticised for associating with loyalist paramilitary groups and conducting triumphalist marches through majority-Catholic areas in Ulster. There is still an annual 'marching season' of events between April-August, which reaches its zenith on 12 July when Orangemen commemorate William's victory

in Ireland. Known as 'The Twelfth', this commemoration involves some Protestant communities lighting bonfires and Orangemen organising marches. Some of the traditional marching routes pass through staunchly Catholic or nationalist areas in certain Northern Irish towns. Sectarian violence has almost always been a part of these events since 1797.

Orangemen have always maintained that they are entitled to celebrate their culture in public, but their marches have indisputably contributed to sectarian problems in Ulster alongside the violence perpetrated by republican and loyalist paramilitary groups at large. Many people have been killed, injured or displaced during '12 July' events across the centuries, with three people being killed as recently as 1998.

When William III landed in 1690 he claimed that Ireland would soon be "settled in a lasting peace." The events of his campaign tragically produced the complete opposite in the following centuries. It is an unfortunate legacy from the dark shadow of history when religious conflicts once tore Europe apart.



Police look on as a car is torched during a riot on an Orangemen march in Ardoyne, 2012. This is William III's unfortunate legacy in Ireland

IN THE RANKS

The war saw highly professional European forces lay the foundations for modern warfare

The late 17th century was an era where the professionalisation of national armed forces became recognisably modern. European armies and navies were now highly structured and equipped, but fighting on the battlefield was still a tough experience. Any unit that was not disciplined enough to resist these competent and experienced forces would likely suffer ignominious defeats.

ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH REDCOAT

Once William III had become king of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1688 he exploited the new armies at his disposal to wage the War of the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV. His timing was excellent because, although he had deposed James II, his predecessor had made serious efforts to increase the power of his armed forces. The size of British armies had increased fourfold between 1685-88, although English, Scottish and Irish armies remained separate institutions until the early 18th century.

By the 1680s, British armies had become highly professional and fully equipped compared to the largely ceremonial and policing role they played during Charles II's reign. There were political complaints that James's standing army was reminiscent of a "new Cromwellian dictatorship" but the king had no qualms about resurrecting the New Model Army. James was particularly proud of his English army and said it had "the reputation

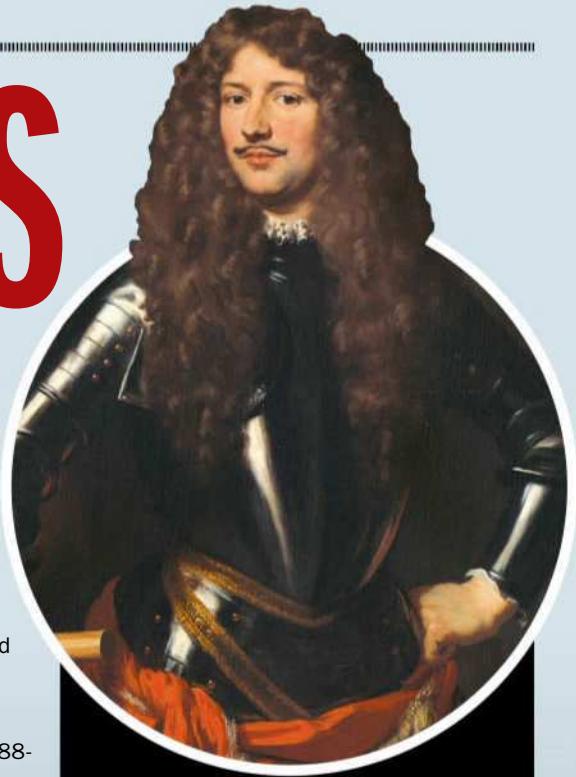
of being the best paid, the best equipped and the most sightly troops of any in Europe."

It was under James and William that the famous 'Redcoats' arguably came into their own and learned many lessons between 1688-97. These experiences would successfully bear fruit shortly afterwards between 1701-14, when the duke of Marlborough led them in several dazzling victories during the War of the Spanish Succession.



"THE REPUTATION OF BEING THE BEST PAID, THE BEST EQUIPPED AND THE MOST SIGHTLY TROOPS OF ANY IN EUROPE"

Right: James II in the scarlet uniform of a general officer. As head of the British armies, James expanded his forces, and the armies went on to glory under William III and Marlborough



Cornelis Evertsen the Youngest was a Dutch admiral who commanded part of William III's invasion fleet during the Glorious Revolution and fought at the Battle of Beachy Head

DUTCH SAILOR

THE DUTCH NAVY WAS A FORMIDABLE FORCE THAT FOUGHT ALONGSIDE ITS ENGLISH ALLIES WITH GREAT DETERMINATION AGAINST THE FRENCH

The Dutch Republic experienced a 'Golden Age' during the 17th century and had a powerful navy. The Dutch had won great naval victories against the English during the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars, but once William of Orange became king of England, the two nations fought together in the Grand Alliance.

Anglo-Dutch fleets achieved mixed successes against the French at sea, but Dutch sailors were renowned for their tenacious fighting spirit. After the Battle of Beachy Head it was said that, "Victory went to the French, Honour to the Dutch and Shame to the English."

FRENCH SOLDIER

The army of Louis XIV was arguably the first recognisably modern armed force. After he assumed personal power in 1661, Louis exercised direct control and introduced the first example of modernised conscription with a military draft in 1688. French soldiers were properly uniformed and barracks, used socket bayonets, pontoon bridges and were led by men who commanded from the front. The highly professional nature of Louis's army meant that they won many victories despite being surrounded by William III's Grand Alliance.

Left: Louis XIV's soldiers wore standardised uniforms. Guards and royal regiments wore blue (pictured), Swiss regiments wore red, while regular infantrymen wore grey-white

1:72**A50181****RAF CENTENARY GIFT SET**

On 1st April 1918, the amalgamation of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps into a single air fighting force saw the birth of the Royal Air Force and with it, the establishment of the world's first independent air arm. Over the course of its illustrious history, no other aircraft type has represented the strength and capability of a modern RAF more effectively than the fighter, these aircraft are often regarded as the most exciting machines created by man and during the past 100 years. The Sopwith Camel, one of the first great fighter aircraft, was responsible for shooting down more enemy aircraft than any other type during WWI. Possessing speed, firepower and manoeuvrability, the Camel was a formidable opponent and became the mount of many successful RAF aces. Arguably the most famous aircraft of the Royal Air Force, the Supermarine Spitfire is the epitome of fighter aircraft design, with its sleek profile and distinctive elliptical wings making it particularly beautiful. Beneath this aesthetically appealing exterior lay a ruthless fighting machine that proved decisive during the Battle of Britain and saw constant development throughout WWII, with over 20,000 aircraft eventually produced. The Spitfire equivalent of today's Royal Air Force is the spectacular Eurofighter Typhoon, one of the world's most capable fighter aircraft, which possesses all the attributes that made both the Camel and Spitfire so successful in combat. As the most effective air defence fighter to ever serve with the RAF, the Typhoon is destined to be protecting Britain's skies for many years to come and will hope to earn a reputation as distinguished as those of its famous fighting forebears.

**SOPWITH CAMEL 2F.1**

Aircraft flown by Lieutenant, (T./Major) Raymond "Collie" Collishaw, D.S.O., D.S.C., D.F.C. (late R.N.A.S.), No.203 Squadron, Royal Air Force, Western Front, 1918.

Length 81mm Width 118mm Pieces 26

**SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE MK.IA**

No.92 Squadron, Royal Air Force Manston, Kent, England, December 1940.

Length 127mm Width 156mm Pieces 36

**EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON F.MK.2**

No.17 Squadron, Royal Air Force Coningsby, UK, 2007.

Length 221mm Width 152mm Pieces 65

RAF CENTENARY GIFT SET

- SOPWITH CAMEL 2F.1
- SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE Mk.IA
- EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON F.MK.2

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THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOU MONT

Was the defence of this farmhouse as crucial as claimed?
A fresh look at French and Allied sources provides new perspectives

WORDS DR BERNARD & RENÉ WILKIN



“NAPOLEON, WHO HAD BEEN FIGHTING SINCE THE WARS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, NEARLY ALWAYS ADOPTED AGGRESSIVE DOCTRINES IN BATTLE, TRYING TO CRUSH THE ENEMY SWIFTLY AND DECISIVELY”



On 18 June 1815, Napoleon's cannon opened fire at the Allied army at around 11.35am (the exact time is a source of disagreement among witnesses and historians). The Battle of Waterloo had just begun. The French wanted to destroy Wellington's army as well as the Belgian-Dutch military, convinced that the British would sign a peace treaty if Brussels were taken and the enemy general driven out of Belgium.

On the other side, the duke of Wellington was determined to counter the French offensive in Belgium before stopping the troublesome French emperor once and for all. Both commanders had plenty of experience on the battlefield but displayed very different military styles. Napoleon, who had been fighting since the Wars of the French Revolution, nearly always adopted aggressive doctrines in battle, trying to crush the enemy swiftly and decisively. His military might was indisputable, but historians and witnesses have noted that he was not at his best during the Hundred Days. Tired, depressed and overweight, he was probably not fit to lead an army as effectively as previously. Wellington, a cautious commander, preferred defensive positions in order to preserve his men. His careful approach to battle, combined with British discipline in the heat of the action, was key to his many victories during the Peninsular War.

British soldiers slam the gates of Hougoumont farm on the onrushing French forces

Caution was precisely the reason Wellington picked Mont-Saint-Jean to fight the French army. The British commander knew the place already, having noticed its favourable topography the year before. The gentle slopes and the hills around the small hamlet would protect his men from the French cannon. Moreover, four key positions could potentially stop the enemy: the castle of Fichermont (also spelled Frischemont) and the farms of Papelotte, Haye Sainte and Hougoumont (in fact a farm-castle).

On 17 June General Cooke was ordered to reinforce Hougoumont with the light companies of his four battalions of the Guards (First Division). Colonel Macdonnell was made commander of the castle and the farm. One witness, a man named Maaskamp, saw the British at Hougoumont the day before the battle: "During the night, they prepared for the castle's defence. They dug a pit next to the outside hedge, and there was a reinforced wall behind the hedge around the garden and the orchard. They dug loopholes in the wall and placed an elevation platform to fire above it." Companies of the Second Brigade occupied the garden as well as the farm, while men of the First Brigade, commanded by Lord Saltoun, were positioned in the orchard and the wood.

Early on 18 June 1815, the duke of Wellington, the prince of Orange, Generals Hill and Uxbridge, as well as Müffling, a Prussian officer, inspected the Allied lines before going

"AFTER A SHORT INSPECTION, THE GENERAL FAILED TO REPORT THE DANGEROUS STRONGHOLD. HAXO'S SLOPPINESS WAS UNFORGIVABLE, EVEN IF HOUGOUMONT WAS HIDDEN NOT ONLY BY THE WOOD BUT ALSO BY THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE REGION"

down to Hougoumont. The prince of Orange, having had a close look at the farm-castle, sent 300 men to reinforce it. Wellington also positioned the light company of the Coldstream Guards and men of the Third Guards to the west of Hougoumont. Soldiers from Nassau and Hanover were placed in the wood. At 10.00am, Captain Büsgen and six companies of the Second Nassau Regiment arrived, totalling 800 soldiers. 400 men were positioned in the orchard while the others occupied the farm-castle. As a result, most of the men in the garrison on the day were German. Light companies of the Third Guards were moved to the western lane area, and men of the light company of the Coldstream Guards were ordered to defend the north gate and the buildings of the lower courtyard.

Confusion and visibility

The farm-castle of Hougoumont was hidden from the French line by a small wooded area. The map used by Napoleon and his generals,

made by Ferraris between 1770-1778, showed Hougoumont itself, but the walls around the structure were not clearly drawn and the wood looked far more accessible than in reality.

Before the battle, the emperor had ordered General Haxo, commanding the génie (military engineering), to reconnoitre the enemy lines. After a short inspection, the general failed to report the dangerous stronghold. Haxo's sloppiness was unforgivable, even if Hougoumont was hidden not only by the wood but also by the topography of the region. The fortified farm-castle was equally invisible from Rossomme farm, where Napoleon stood during the first part of the battle. This important point was highlighted early: in 1817 a British man named John Booth wrote that, "It is said the enemy were ignorant of the strength of the position, the garden wall being concealed by the wood and hedge."

At 11.00am General Reille, commander of the French II Corps, was asked to take the wood of Hougoumont. It should be noted

A private of the wagon train bringing ammunition to the farm-castle



that Napoleon's order did not mention the farm-castle. This objective was explained by Napoleon in his book: the attack was supposed to be a diversion, a way to draw Wellington's men away from the centre, the point of the main French assault. From Wellington's perspective, the loss of Hougoumont was unthinkable. The capture of the farm-castle would have threatened his right wing and the whole Allied position. A vigorous defence was therefore required.

Reille sent Napoleon's brother, Prince Jérôme, and four regiments on the left. To protect the soldiers moving towards Hougoumont, a division battery belonging to II Corps opened fire. The horse battery of Piré's cavalry division was also sent to support the assault. The artillery, however, was unable to fire directly at the farm-castle. Three British batteries, east of the road to Nivelles, riposted. The battle for the British right wing had just begun.

The first regiment of light infantry launched a bayonet assault to take the wood, an action that saw the death of General Bauduin. Despite

Hougoumont as seen on the Ferraris map, used by the French army at Waterloo

their resilience, the First Battalion of Nassau and a company of the King's German Legion (KGL) were forced to retreat but were soon assisted by British soldiers. To take the 300 remaining metres (330 yards) separating the French from the farm, the Third line infantry regiment followed the First Léger. Allied defenders, vastly outnumbered, took cover behind the trees to fire back at the enemy. After an hour of heavy fighting, the French managed to repel the soldiers of Nassau as well as the British who had come forward to help them. However, upon exiting the wood, Jérôme's men found themselves in a killing field – an empty space of 30 metres (33 yards) between the trees and the farm.

Reille's orders, given to him at 11.00am, did not ask for the capture of the farm-castle. The initial assault on Hougoumont was in fact unnecessary. It was either a misunderstanding or Jérôme Bonaparte's responsibility. It is also possible that the French, having pushed the Allies from the wood, spontaneously attacked the farm. However, Hougoumont was far from easy to capture. Firing through improvised loopholes, soldiers of the Second Company, Second Nassau took aim calmly at the nearby targets.

At such short distance, the French were hard to miss. Jérôme's men returned fire but wasted their shots on the protective wall. The British sent more artillery until the ridge above the farm-castle was lined with guns.

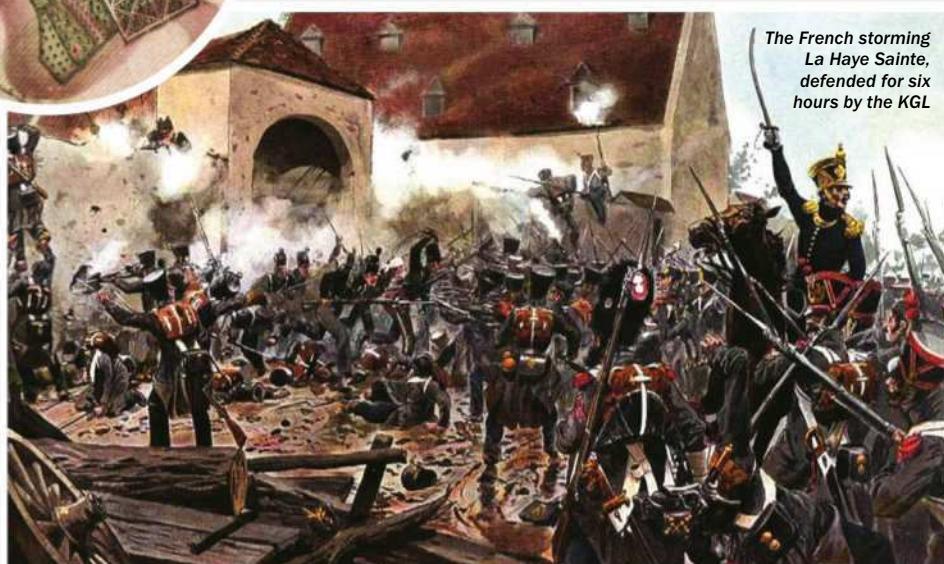
THE KING'S GERMAN LEGION

MEN OF HANOVER FOUGHT UNDER WELLINGTON'S ORDERS

In 1803 the Electorate of Hanover was disbanded by the Convention of Arlensburg. As the French occupied the region, several Hanoverian officers and soldiers retreated to Britain to carry on the struggle against Napoleon. Britain was a logical choice, since George III was also the elector of Hanover. The King's German Legion (KGL) was formally created at the end of the same year by Major Halkett and Colonel von der Decken.

Comprised mostly of expatriate German soldiers, it included cavalry, light infantry and line infantry brigades, as well as artillery and engineering units. During the next years, the KGL served with distinction in Pomerania, Denmark, Spain, Portugal and Italy. At the Battle of Waterloo, almost 6,000 men of the KGL were deployed. The First Brigade, led by Colonel du Plat, was positioned between Hougoumont and Merbe-Braine while the Second Light Battalion fortified the farm of La Haye Sainte, preparing for a difficult but heroic day. Other men of the KGL held different positions along the line. At 3pm the First Brigade was sent by Wellington to prevent the farm from being isolated from the rest of the line. During the following action, Colonel du Plat was killed while his brigade suffered heavy losses.

King George I (1660-1727), was elector of Hanover when he became king of Great Britain



The French storming La Haye Sainte, defended for six hours by the KGL



The defence of the wall against the French emerging from the wood

THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOUMONT

NORTH GATE

CHATEAU

CHAPEL

SOUTH GATE



THE CHATEAU

DETAILED CONTEMPORARY DESCRIPTIONS BRING THE FARM-CASTLE TO LIFE

If the meaning of 'Hougoumont' is still debated by experts, the history of the place is well-known. The building was erected around 1637 by a noble family. During the Hundred Days, the farm-castle was the property of an 86-year-old Austrian officer, Major Philippe Gouret de Louville, who lived in Nivelles. In June 1815 the farm was rented by Antoine Dumonceau while the castle was left unoccupied.

Captain Büggen, who fought with the Second Nassau Regiment at Waterloo, described Hougoumont: "The farm was in

the shape of a long, closed rectangle. The building made up three of the sides and the fourth, on the left, was made up partly by the garden wall and partly by other buildings. This rectangle was divided in two internally by the living accommodation and a wall... Each section had one large gate, the upper facing towards the enemy position, the lower towards their opponents. Joining the farm to the left was a vegetable garden with a wall five to six feet [1.52-1.82 metres] high along its front and left, and a hedge to its rear... Left of the garden was an orchard. The vegetable garden and orchard were not joined, but the latter had a hedge along its front, running along the same line as the wall of the garden." A wood stood south of the farm, hiding Hougoumont from the French side. It also made direct artillery fire impossible.

The site has changed dramatically since 1815. The castle was destroyed during the battle. Other structures, such as the farm and the cowshed near the north gate burned. Three lonely chestnut trees still stand today as sole reminders of the wooded area. A close inspection reveals the damage inflicted by musket balls.

GARDEN

Illustration: Rocío Espín

WOODS

THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOUMONT

Despite suffering heavy casualties in the empty space separating the wood and the building, the French reached the south gate. They tried to break the door with their muskets but were fired at from the flank. Others tried to climb the garden's wall but were promptly pierced by Nassau bayonets.

Bodies piled up as the French tried to find an entry point. At one moment, a few French soldiers opened the south gate and managed to enter the courtyard. Lieutenant Diederich von Wilder, from Nassau, was chased by a French sapper near the farmhouse. The enemy chopped the officer's hand with his axe, but the south gate was closed and all Frenchmen were killed. The exhausted assailants were finally forced to take cover in the wood.

Strangely, a few witnesses on the French side claimed that the assault had succeeded. Captain Pierre Robinaux presented the first part of the assault on Hougoumont as a victory in his diary: "The corps to which I belonged [Second] headed for the farm of Hougoumont, reinforced and defended by the English. It is located on a small hill overlooking all sides of the field, and at the bottom of this farm there is a large wood below, in which we were walking in tight columns; we were at the extreme left of the army. Count Reille, who was leading the Second Corps, ordered us to take the position occupied by the English, capture the farm and hold this position during the battle, without losing or winning more ground. Immediately, the charge was ordered and we climbed with our bayonets toward the enemy, who opposed us strongly. The combat was fierce on both sides and the shooting was deadly and was carried on with ardour. Thirty minutes were enough for the French to take this formidable position".

Jérôme's stubbornness

The reality on the ground was less simple. General Guilleminot, Jérôme's chief-of-staff, wanted to stop the assault, finding it more useful to reinforce the French position in the wood. As General Reille wrote after the battle, he also asked Prince Jérôme to stay put: "The First Brigade went forward and tried to capture the fortified farm instead of keeping the wood by positioning lines of skirmishers. The order was sent several times, but other assaults were launched by other brigades and the division was kept busy there the whole day." Reille's version, despite being criticised by French historians, is plausible. The day before, he had told Napoleon, who was enquiring about the British army, that the Peninsular War had taught him important lessons. He said that Wellington "knows how to position his men. I see English infantry as invincible in a



Fighting at Hougoumont involved brutal close-quarters fighting as the opposing forces clashed around the walls and gates

frontal assault, thanks to their tenacity and fire superiority. Before we can fight them with our bayonets, we can expect to lose half our men."

Despite these warnings and the above-mentioned orders, Prince Jérôme tried again to capture the position. He called his second brigade, led by General Soye, to relieve Bauduin's men. With them, he moved towards Hougoumont from the west, exposing his soldiers to British artillery fire. In spite of heavy losses, the French launched an assault on the north side of Hougoumont at 12.00-12.30pm. At that point, 150 light infantrymen and part of the Coldstream light infantry were outside the farm complex. Brutal hand-to-hand combat followed, but the defenders did not break. In the heat of battle, Sergeant Fraser charged a mounted French officer and made him fall from his horse. Colonel de Cubières, the commander of the First Léger, was badly injured but survived the day. Reaching the north gate, a sturdy sous-lieutenant called Legros, known as 'L'enfonceur' (the smasher), grabbed

a pioneer's axe to breach the gate's panels. About 30 French soldiers followed him into the courtyard, screaming "Vive l'empereur". Macdonnell, hearing the enemy, rushed with his men before fighting his way to the gates. The brave British officer and Corporal James Graham managed to close the gates, while the daring French who had penetrated the courtyard were slaughtered.

Meanwhile, Wellington noticed Soye's movement toward Hougoumont. Stretched thin, he nonetheless dispatched four companies of the Second Battalion Coldstream Guards and ordered Major Bull's battery to fire at the wood. Reinforcements arrived at 1.00pm, in time to help Nassau soldiers at the orchard wall, now attacked by General Soye and his men. Together with the KGL and Lord Saltoun's soldiers, they fought against French battalions of the 92nd and 93rd line infantry regiments. Lord Saltoun, overwhelmed by superior power, was forced to retreat behind the hedge, where he was assisted by two

"A STURDY SOUS-LIEUTENANT CALLED LEGROS, KNOWN AS 'L'ENFONCEUR' (THE SMASHER), GRABBED A PIONEER'S AXE TO BREACH THE GATE'S PANELS"



The view through a loophole made in the garden wall by Allied soldiers to fire at the French

"I SEE ENGLISH INFANTRYMEN AS INVINCIBLE IN A FRONTAL ASSAULT, THANKS TO THEIR TENACITY AND FIRE SUPERIORITY. BEFORE WE CAN FIGHT THEM WITH OUR BAYONETS, WE CAN EXPECT TO LOSE HALF OUR MEN"

— Honoré Charles Reille

A pistol used by a man of the King's German Legion

THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOUMONT

companies of the Third Scots Guards. At 2.00pm Saltoun launched a counterattack to capture a piece of artillery the French had just brought. This attempt failed, the French having just been reinforced by three companies of the Fourth Léger and three companies of the 100th line infantry regiment, led by General Jamin.

It seems that the following anecdote, reported by Sir Horace Seymour, happened at the same point: "Late in the day of the 18th, I was called by some officers of the Third Guards defending Hougoumont, to use my best endeavours to send them musket ammunitions. Soon afterwards I fell in with a private of the wagon train in charge of a tumbril on the crest of the position. I merely pointed to him where he was wanted, when he gallantly started his horses, and drove straight down the hill to the farm, to

the gate of which I saw him arrive. He must have lost his horses, as there was a severe fire kept on him. I feel convinced to that man's service the Guards owe their ammunition."

Exhaustion and reinforcement

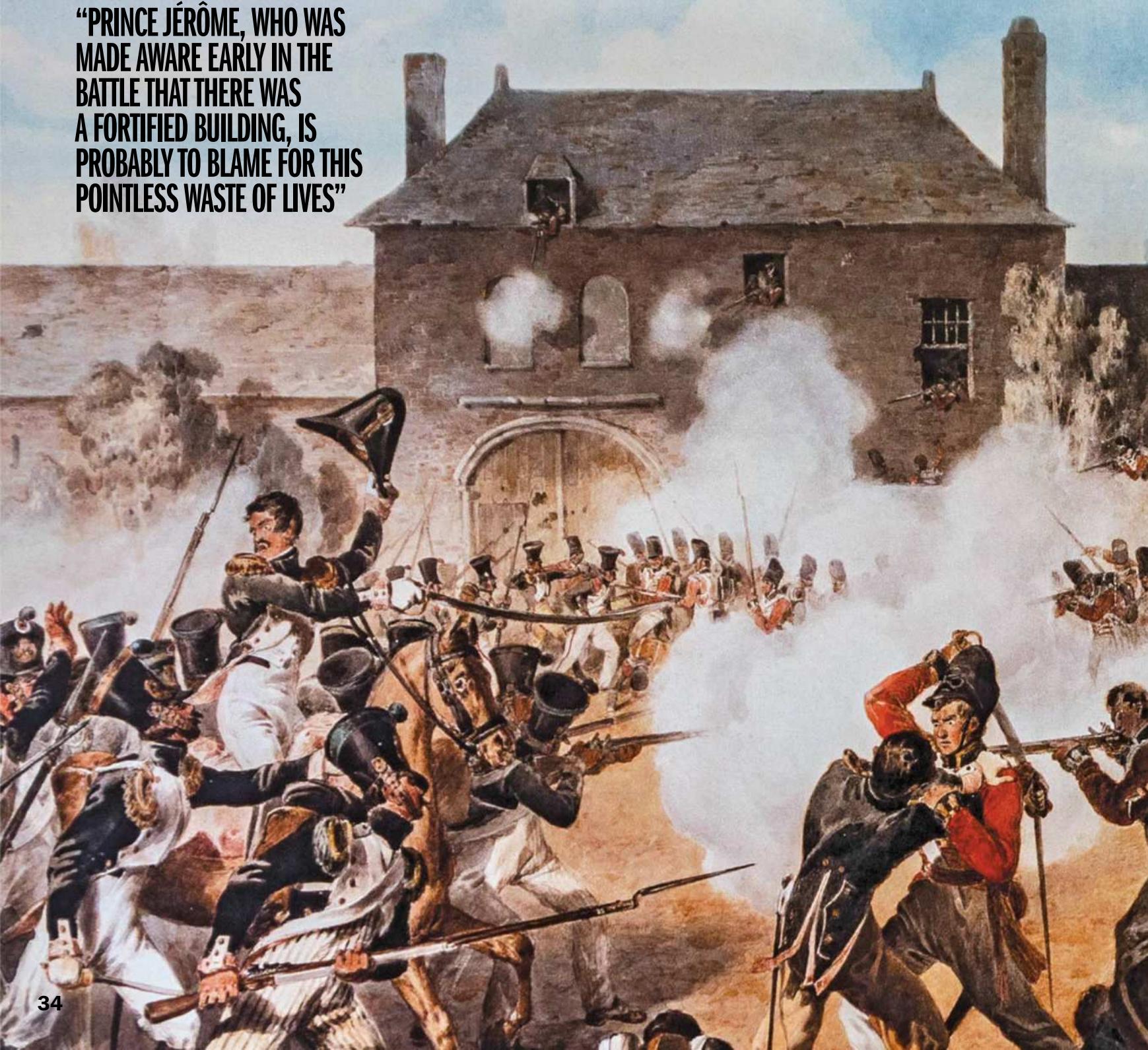
Lord Saltoun, having lost many of his light troops, welcomed the arrival of Colonel Hepburn and the remaining companies of the Third Guards. Having reached the hedge of the orchard, Saltoun left Hepburn in charge while he returned to the position held by the First Guards. Hepburn did not lose time to charge French soldiers who were trying to penetrate the orchard through a gap at the southwest corner.

Casualties were high on the French side, a fact remembered by Major Jean-Louis Baux in a letter to Soult: "I had no officers anymore,

more than 60 had died and I had to promote new ones. Noncommissioned officers acted as captains and, pressed by the circumstances when I had to leave the farm to go forward, I had to designate new platoon leaders and take them among corporals. How to keep order in such circumstances?" The hedge and the orchard changed hands several times, but the French were systematically forced to give them up.

At around 2.30pm, the castle caught fire for unknown reasons. Wellington, witnessing this, stated, "I see that the fire has communicated from the haystack to the roof of the château. You must however still keep your men in those parts to which the fire does not reach. Take care that no men are lost by the falling in of the roof, or floors. After they have fallen in, occupy the walls inside of the gardens; particularly if

"PRINCE JÉRÔME, WHO WAS MADE AWARE EARLY IN THE BATTLE THAT THERE WAS A FORTIFIED BUILDING, IS PROBABLY TO BLAME FOR THIS POINTLESS WASTE OF LIVES"



it should be possible for the enemy to pass through the embers in the inside of the house." While the smoke bothered the defenders, it did little to help the French.

Almost at the same time – at least according to the British – Bachelu's division launched another doomed assault on the orchard. Both sides were now exhausted. The French were disorganised and left without able commanders, while the British were desperately looking for reinforcements. Ensign Standen remembered, "When we in turn retreated, our attacks became each time feebler. Although we drove them out, our advances became shorter. They fed an immense force of skirmishers; we had no support." At 3.00pm Wellington sent du Plat's brigade of the KGL to stop the French from occupying the hedge. This move

was dangerous as it exposed the Germans to French artillery fire. The Hanoverians managed to push back the French from the hedge but were forced to retreat soon after, having lost Colonel du Plat and many men.

At 4.00pm another assault was launched against the orchard from the southeast. The French occupied the orchard but were immediately counter-charged by the Third Guards. A last assault was launched by the French at 6.30pm. They tried to take the orchard but, once again, were driven back. At around the same time, the French were capturing La Haye Sainte. At 7.00pm three battalions of Brunswick soldiers came from the west while the Second Battalion of the KGL and a Landwehr battalion came from the east. They pushed the French entirely from the orchard

and wood and were soon followed by the men still holding Hougoumont. Together, they rushed forward to counter the Imperial Guard's assault. The battle for Hougoumont was over.

Blames and consequences

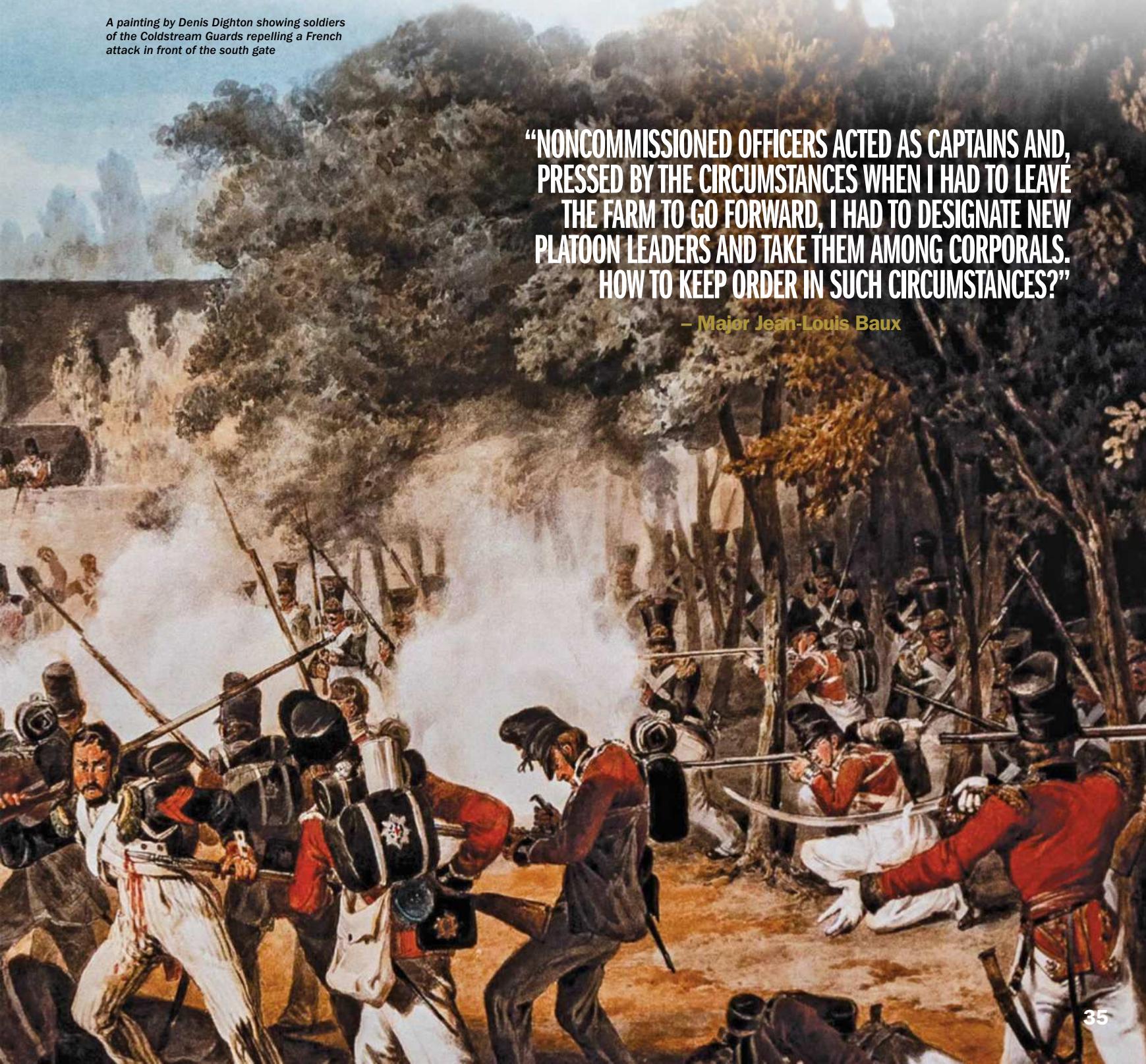
Historians have debated for years who was responsible for the assault on Hougoumont. As discussed above, Napoleon seems to have ignored the presence of a stronghold when launching the battle and had, anyway, ordered the capture of the wood. Prince Jérôme, who was made aware early in the battle that there was a fortified building, is probably to blame for this pointless waste of lives.

Napoleon's brother was not portrayed kindly by his contemporaries. In 1812 the emperor had told General de Caulaincourt that, "Jérôme

A painting by Denis Dighton showing soldiers of the Coldstream Guards repelling a French attack in front of the south gate

"NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS ACTED AS CAPTAINS AND, PRESSED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN I HAD TO LEAVE THE FARM TO GO FORWARD, I HAD TO DESIGNATE NEW PLATOON LEADERS AND TAKE THEM AMONG CORPORALS. HOW TO KEEP ORDER IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES?"

– Major Jean-Louis Baux



THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOUMONT

only liked parties, women, representations and celebrations". A letter written by Jérôme during the Russian campaign, when he was king of Westphalia, betrayed his difficult and moody temper: "I wrote a letter to the emperor, who must understand that as commander of the right wing, I will never obey anybody".

On another occasion, Jérôme asked Napoleon to put him in charge of the French cavalry, to which the emperor replied, "You are crazy. Why? You think yourself capable of this but you are not even capable of leading a hundred men, of sending a squadron to battle. What a peculiar pretension!" Despite Jérôme's mediocrity, Napoleon gave him responsibilities in 1815. The lack of confidence in the High Command, suspected by many of treason, forced Napoleon to call a member of his family. Jérôme's lack of military abilities was supposed to be counterbalanced by competent staff officers such as Reille and Guilleminot. Unfortunately for the French, they did little to stop the prince in his pointless attempts.

This brief description of Jérôme's character should highlight the fact that Napoleon was seeing Hougoumont as a diversion. Even after the battle, he did not think much of what had

THE GATES of HOUGOUMONT

PROJECT HOUGOUMONT RAISED FUNDS TO SAVE AND RESTORE THE ICONIC SITE

Hougoumont farm, just like the surrounding battlefield of Waterloo, has changed dramatically in two centuries. The surviving buildings, all heavily damaged, were restored while most ruins were cleared. Until the end of the 20th century Hougoumont was owned by a noble family and used as a farm. In 2006 the place, in a precarious state, was sold to the self-governing Walloon region. With the bicentennial anniversary of the battle getting closer, Project Hougoumont, a charity, launched a campaign to raise funds and restore the farm. This successful operation allowed the historical site to be preserved. In June 2015 a new memorial showing two soldiers fighting at the gates was unveiled by the prince of Wales. Numerous other monuments and plaques, for French and British units or officers, can be found in or near the buildings.

A commemorative plaque for French General Pierre-François Bauduin, who was mortally wounded at Hougoumont



happened on his left wing. In his excellent *Waterloo: The French Perspective*, Andrew Field highlighted the fact that Hougoumont got "no mention in [Napoleon's] first report on the battle" (published in the *Moniteur* on 20 June). The emperor was a good leader who knew perfectly well how incompetent his brother was. He would never have put him in charge of a key point of the battlefield.

Once Napoleon was made aware of what was happening at Hougoumont, he immediately recalled Jérôme, who was left jobless for the rest of the day. Also, an important piece of history was left by Jérôme himself. On 15 July 1815, he wrote the following letter: "At lunch, the army was in formation. I was first on the far-left in front of a wood occupied by the English... At 12.15, I received the order to begin the assault. I marched on the wood, that I took (after fierce fighting), killing many enemy soldiers, but I lost many as well.

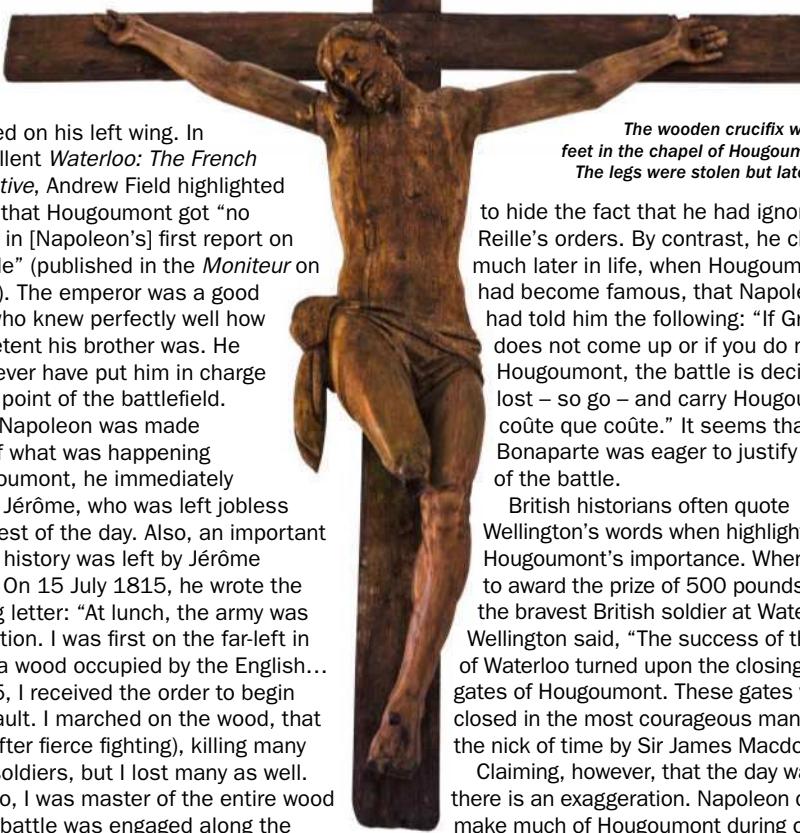
"At two, I was master of the entire wood and the battle was engaged along the whole line. But the enemy, understanding how important my position was, came with more men and took it back. I sent the whole division, and at three, after the most bloody battle, took it back. I kept it until the end of the battle. The enemy lost 6,000 men while I suffered 2,000 casualties, including one of my generals and most superior officers.

"Moreover, the men lost on 16 [June 1815], during the battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras] meant that I disposed of only two battalions. I was ordered by the emperor to join him. He welcomed me even more enthusiastically than he had the day before, saying that, 'it was impossible to fight better. Stay with me as you do not have other battalions, go everywhere where there is danger.'

This letter, written less than a month after the Battle of Waterloo, was full of inexactitudes and omissions. Jérôme was trying to exonerate himself. It should be highlighted that the farm the prince tried to capture again and again was never mentioned in this letter – an attempt

"NAPOLEON WAS SEEING HOUGOUMONT AS A DIVERSION... HE DID NOT THINK MUCH OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON HIS LEFT WING"

The courtyard, showing the chapel and the gardener's house as well as the castle's ruins



The wooden crucifix with charred feet in the chapel of Hougoumont castle. The legs were stolen but later retrieved

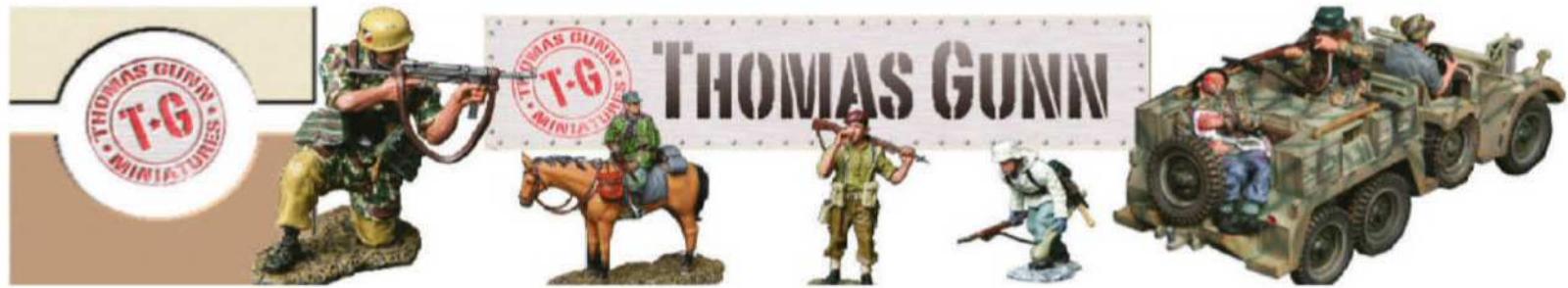
to hide the fact that he had ignored Reille's orders. By contrast, he claimed much later in life, when Hougoumont had become famous, that Napoleon had told him the following: "If Grouchy does not come up or if you do not carry Hougoumont, the battle is decidedly lost – so go – and carry Hougoumont – coute que coute." It seems that Jérôme Bonaparte was eager to justify his part of the battle.

British historians often quote Wellington's words when highlighting Hougoumont's importance. When asked to award the prize of 500 pounds to the bravest British soldier at Waterloo, Wellington said, "The success of the Battle of Waterloo turned upon the closing of the gates of Hougoumont. These gates were closed in the most courageous manner at the nick of time by Sir James Macdonnell."

Claiming, however, that the day was won there is an exaggeration. Napoleon did not make much of Hougoumont during or after the battle. In fact, the diversion was a partial success, as Wellington was forced to send some of his best men to support his right wing.

Many British historians have exaggerated French casualties. According to Andrew Field, about 7,500 men fought at Hougoumont. Maaskamp, a witness, said that 3,000 bodies were found near the farm-castle. Prince Jérôme, as we have seen, talked about 2,000 dead on the French side. He likely underestimated his casualties and exaggerated British, Belgian, Dutch and German losses. On the Allied side, 3,500 men were involved.

There is no doubt that this part of the battle was a setback for the French, with lives wasted for no good reason. Orders were ignored, and observations poorly conducted. In fact, Hougoumont could symbolise the state of the French army in 1815. Too many valuable officers had died in Russia and Spain, too many generals had followed Louis XVIII, too many weak links were in charge. The invincible 'groggnards', the veterans of Marengo, were no more.



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1918

THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

PART III

In July, Foch would surprise the Germans on the Marne – the prelude to their defeat by the end of the year

WORDS PROFESSOR WILLIAM PHILPOTT

French army machine gunners take up position on the Marne battlefield

As summer passed on the Western Front, fortunes were to change. The blows that had been raining on the British and French fronts since March were weakening, while Allied resources were growing. Prompted to accelerate the dispatch of men to Europe as the military crisis escalated, American forces were now gathering in large numbers and starting to enter the battle. The numerical advantage the Germans had enjoyed in the spring after their peace with Bolshevik Russia had disappeared, and their troops were tiring after four months of hard fighting.





Although French and British troops were also tired, they had grown in confidence. They had held the enemy onslaught, and the active defence Foch conducted had shown them that they were quite capable of halting the Germans and striking strong blows in their turn. Foch always had in mind a bigger counterattack, one that would exploit the inherent weaknesses in Ludendorff's flailing blows to reverse the fortunes of war. The Second Battle of the Marne in late July would prove there was more fight left in the enemy, which Ludendorff claimed was about to break.

The thrust and counter-thrust on the battlefields of the Western Front in 1918 masked a more fundamental issue. The home fronts of both sides had been gripped by weariness after three and a half years of war and, after the example furnished by Russia, there was concern whether they would hold while the armies fought things to a conclusion. French and British soldiers and civilians would respond positively to the crisis. Frenchmen had not defended their national soil since 1914 only to lose it at the end. Their premier, Georges Clemenceau, tapped into their patriotism: "My foreign policy and my home policy are the same. At home I wage war, abroad I wage war...I shall go on waging war."

"THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE IN LATE JULY WOULD PROVE THERE WAS MORE FIGHT LEFT IN THE ENEMY, WHICH LUDENDORFF CLAIMED WAS ABOUT TO BREAK"



Above: British soldiers using a captured German machine gun during the Second battle of the Marne

British workers happily sacrificed their holidays to manufacture the munitions needed by their hard-pressed army. Even Italy, badly shocked by the Battle of Caporetto in autumn 1917, had largely recovered by mid-1918 and was able to send an army corps to reinforce the Western Front.

In Germany, however, the situation was more desperate, with an Allied blockade reducing the people to near-starvation and growing political unrest in the face of a strengthening military dictatorship on the home front. German politician Kurt Riezler recognised that "all depends on the offensive... should it not succeed there will come a severe moral crisis which probably none of the present government leaders has the talent to master effectively."

In the spring, Ludendorff had staked the German Empire's political future on a victory. Yet when his hungry soldiers fell voraciously on well-stocked Allied supply depots, it became clear to them that the high command had misled them, and that the Allies were not starving too. When Foch's counter-stroke on the Marne obliged Ludendorff, himself in an increasing state of nervous exhaustion, to announce to his troops in early August that his so-called 'peace offensive' had failed and that the army was resuming the defensive, he was effectively admitting that the

THE AEF ENTERS THE BATTLE

AMERICAN FORCES WOULD TAKE TIME TO ADAPT TO THE INTENSIVE FIGHTING ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Although America had declared war in April 1917, a year later its army still existed largely on paper. Two divisions, formed from regular forces and some National Guard units, were in France when the German offensive opened, but under strict instructions from President Woodrow Wilson to build a national army, their commander, General John Pershing, had resisted all calls for his troops to be integrated into Allied formations. An exception was made for African-American regiments, which served with distinction in French formations. The French liaison officers who

served with the American Expeditionary Forces could see how poorly prepared they were for modern war. Pershing's doctrine stressed the role of the combat infantryman with his rifle and bayonet, counter to all the tactical lessons of material-intensive warfare learned by the Allies since 1914.

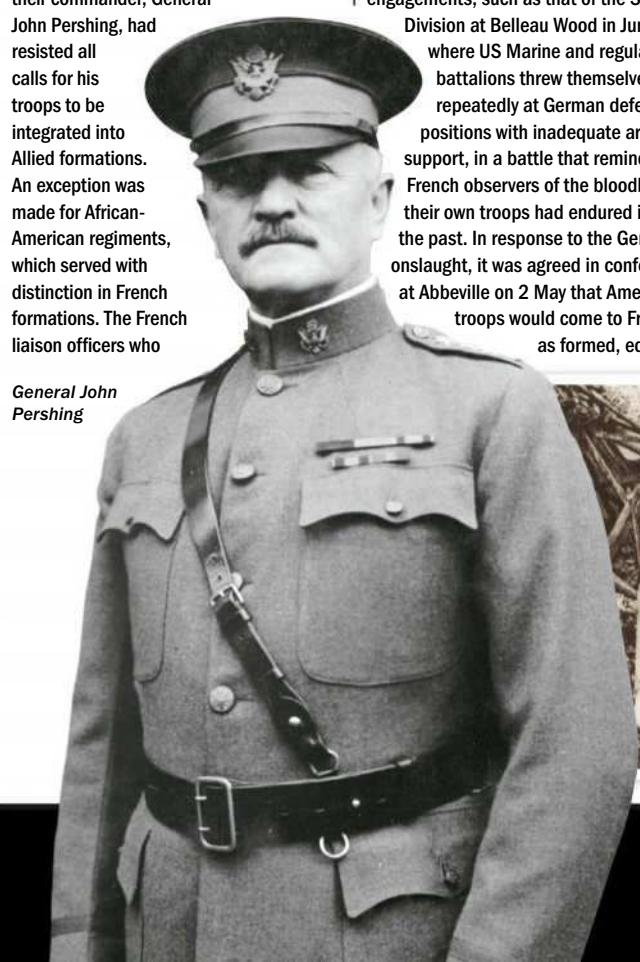
This was to be demonstrated in early engagements, such as that of the Second Division at Belleau Wood in June, where US Marine and regular army battalions threw themselves repeatedly at German defensive positions with inadequate artillery support, in a battle that reminded French observers of the bloodbaths their own troops had endured in the past. In response to the German onslaught, it was agreed in conference at Abbeville on 2 May that American troops would come to France not as formed, equipped

and trained divisions but piecemeal, infantry and machine gunners first. Units would be equipped from Allied stocks and trained behind the Allied lines, taking up defensive positions in the American sector in Lorraine in order to free up French forces for the battle. Over 1.5 million US soldiers came to France thereafter.

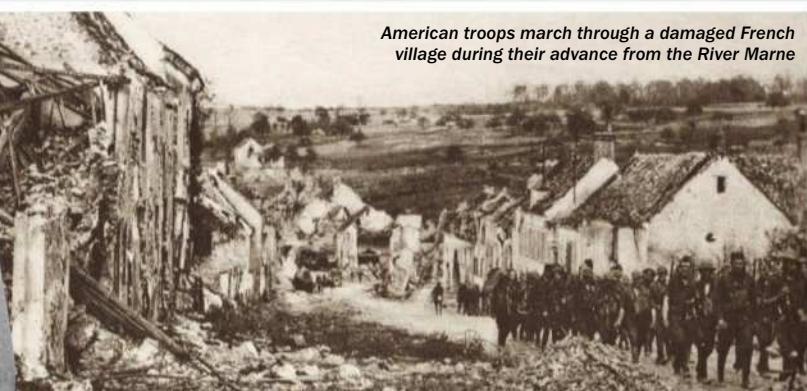
But it was one thing to have men, another to create an effective fighting army. There were 25 formed US divisions in France by the time of the Second Battle of the Marne, each about twice the strength of an Allied division, but few had seen combat of any sort and all needed training and battle experience. A few units had fought with Allied forces. In late May, 28th regiment of First US Division had taken the village of Cantigny in the AEF's first offensive action. But they had depended on French artillery and tank support for success. More American divisions were engaged on the

Marne, where they gained a reputation that was not really justified by their military achievements: the French made a point of supporting all American forces closely, while ensuring that their actions were emphasised in the Allied press for morale purposes.

Five divisions in all took part in the Second Battle of the Marne, and fought with enthusiasm if not great skill. Still, as the army expanded and improved, American forces would play an increasing part in the Allied counterattack. Two American armies were eventually formed. The First Army, with support from French Second Army, recaptured the St Mihiel salient east of Verdun in mid-September. Both American armies would take part in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, September-November 1918, on the extreme right of Foch's armies pushing the Germans out of France and Belgium.



General John Pershing



American troops march through a damaged French village during their advance from the River Marne

A French national defence bonds poster from 1918 shows French, British and Italian troops holding the line while Americans come to their aid

"MY FOREIGN POLICY AND MY HOME POLICY ARE THE SAME. AT HOME I WAGE WAR, ABROAD I WAGE WAR... I SHALL GO ON WAGING WAR"

— French Premier Georges Clemenceau

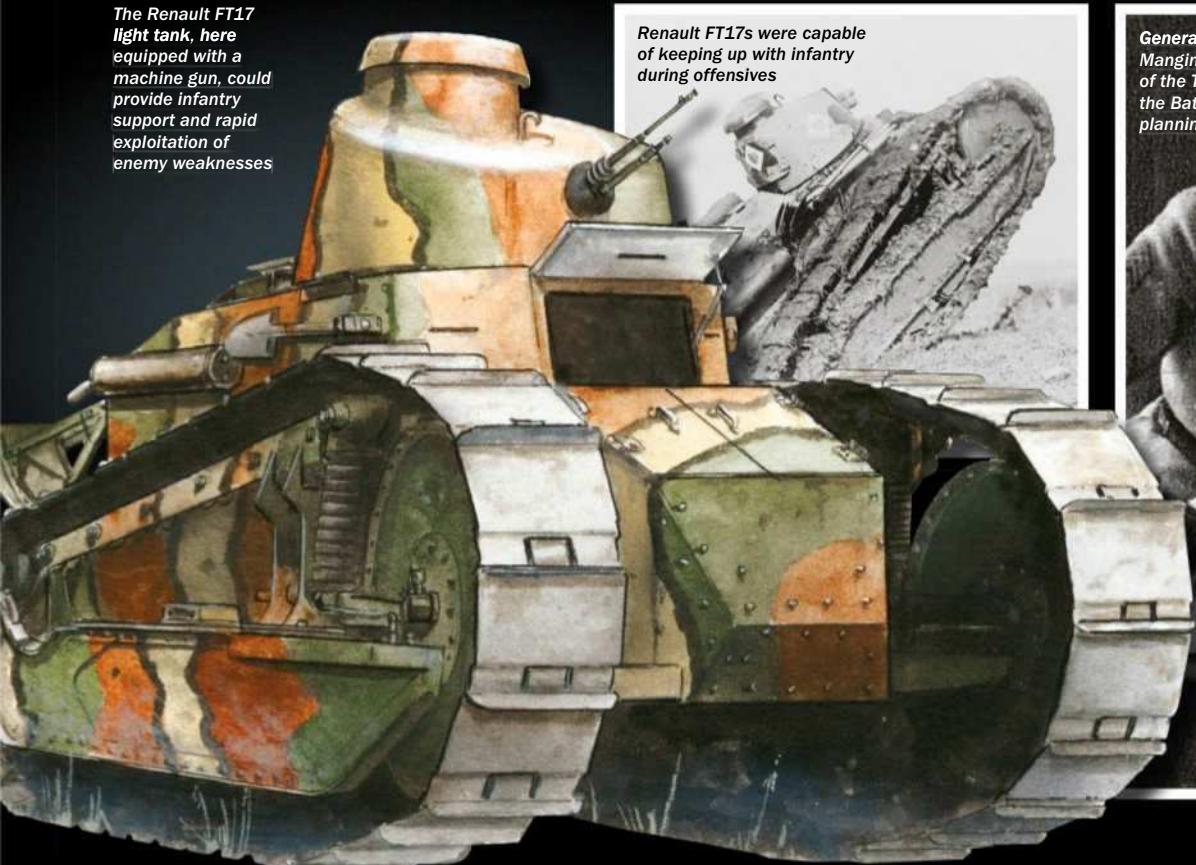
war was lost and that it was only a matter of time before Germany would be forced to make terms.

Ludendorff's admission was the consequence of a fundamental shift in the strategic position at the end of July 1918. Previously on the defensive, the Allies had struck back with a sudden and overwhelming counterattack against the final German offensive, which tried to cross the River Marne and expand the salient created by their May offensive, 'Operation Blücher'.

Foch appreciated that salients were inherently vulnerable, with flanks that could be broken and exposed lines of communication. If he could absorb the energy of the next German attack at the apex of the salient then he could catch the enemy off balance and strike at these vulnerabilities. He would use General Charles Mangin's Tenth Army that had mounted the successful counterattack on the River Matz in June, reinforced by two large and fresh American divisions (First and Second) to attack the right (western) flank of the salient. This would be the first time US troops participated in a large-scale offensive, and Mangin ensured that their inexperience would be offset by close support from veteran French formations, including the Moroccan Division and the Régiment de Marche of the Foreign Legion – the most decorated units in the French army.

As well as the usual powerful support from artillery and aircraft and over 200 medium tanks, the French would be using their new Renault FT17 light tanks en masse for the first time. Armed with either a 37mm gun or a machine gun in a revolving turret, and capable of matching the infantry's speed of advance, this new weapon provided a means for rapid forward exploitation once the crust of the enemy's defence had been pierced. As it was, the flanks of the salient were relatively thinly held and the German field defences were not as elaborate as those that had faced Allied offensives in previous years,

The Renault FT17 light tank, here equipped with a machine gun, could provide infantry support and rapid exploitation of enemy weaknesses



"THE FIRST MORNING SAW RAPID PROGRESS AS THE ENEMY WAS CAUGHT OFF BALANCE: AT ITS DEEPEST THE US SECOND DIVISION ADVANCED SEVEN KILOMETRES"

so Mangin anticipated that once he attacked he could advance rapidly on the enemy's railway communications centre at Soissons.

The 'Marneschutz-Reims' offensive, which began on 15 July, had been going on for several days and had spent its early momentum when Mangin's counterattack, the Battle of Soissons, was launched on 18 July. Elsewhere around the salient other Allied divisions – French, British, US and Italian – engaged the enemy to hold them while Mangin's blow, supported by General Jean-Marie Degoutte's Sixth Army on its right, smashed in the salient's right flank between the River Aisne and Belleau.

Mangin was able to concentrate his forces secretly in the extensive woods of Villers-Cotterêts: an overnight storm drowned out the sound of advancing tanks. The French achieved complete surprise by opening the bombardment at the same time as the infantry attack began. At 4.40am, masses of US and French infantry, supported by French tanks, surged forwards in a thick mist that shrouded their approach, and overwhelmed the thinly held German defences.

The first morning saw rapid progress as the enemy was caught off balance: at its deepest, the US Second Division advanced seven kilometres (4.3 miles). Once the attack had passed the frontline trenches, hundreds

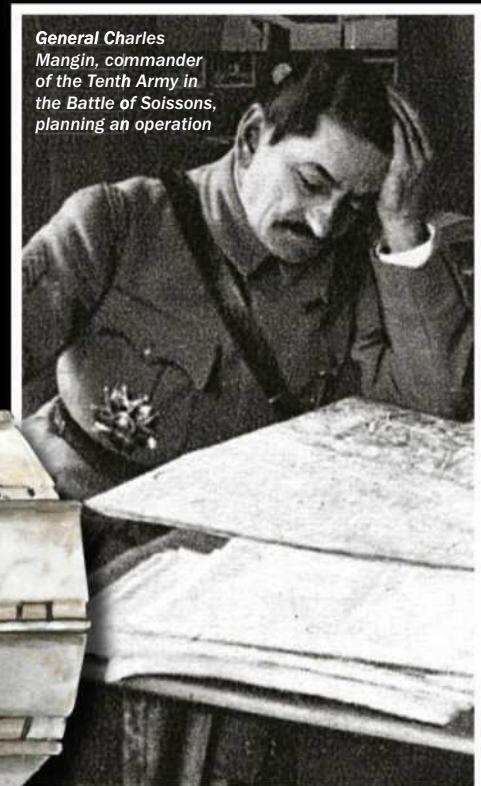
of Renault FT17s, which had been held in reserve to exploit the initial break-in, were sent forwards to wreak havoc in the German rear areas during the long summer day. Only the fact that the German positions were dissected by deep ravines, in which the light tanks could not operate, gave the defenders spaces to regroup and organise resistance.

As with all offensives, by the afternoon the momentum of the assault was slowing, as attacking troops tired and German reserves were deployed. Attempts to follow up over the following days had more limited success. The tanks, now used in small units rather than en masse, suffered heavy losses as the enemy's field artillery was deployed to engage them, and only localised gains were made.

Nevertheless, Mangin's blow had achieved the desired result. The railway junction at Soissons came within range of French artillery fire, and Ludendorff ordered a general withdrawal from the salient, fearing his forces would be trapped and annihilated. He did so with reluctance, suggesting he was growing increasingly out of touch with the military situation. His subordinates pressed him to retreat, justifying their view with reports of collapsing morale and increasing rates of desertion among their troops.

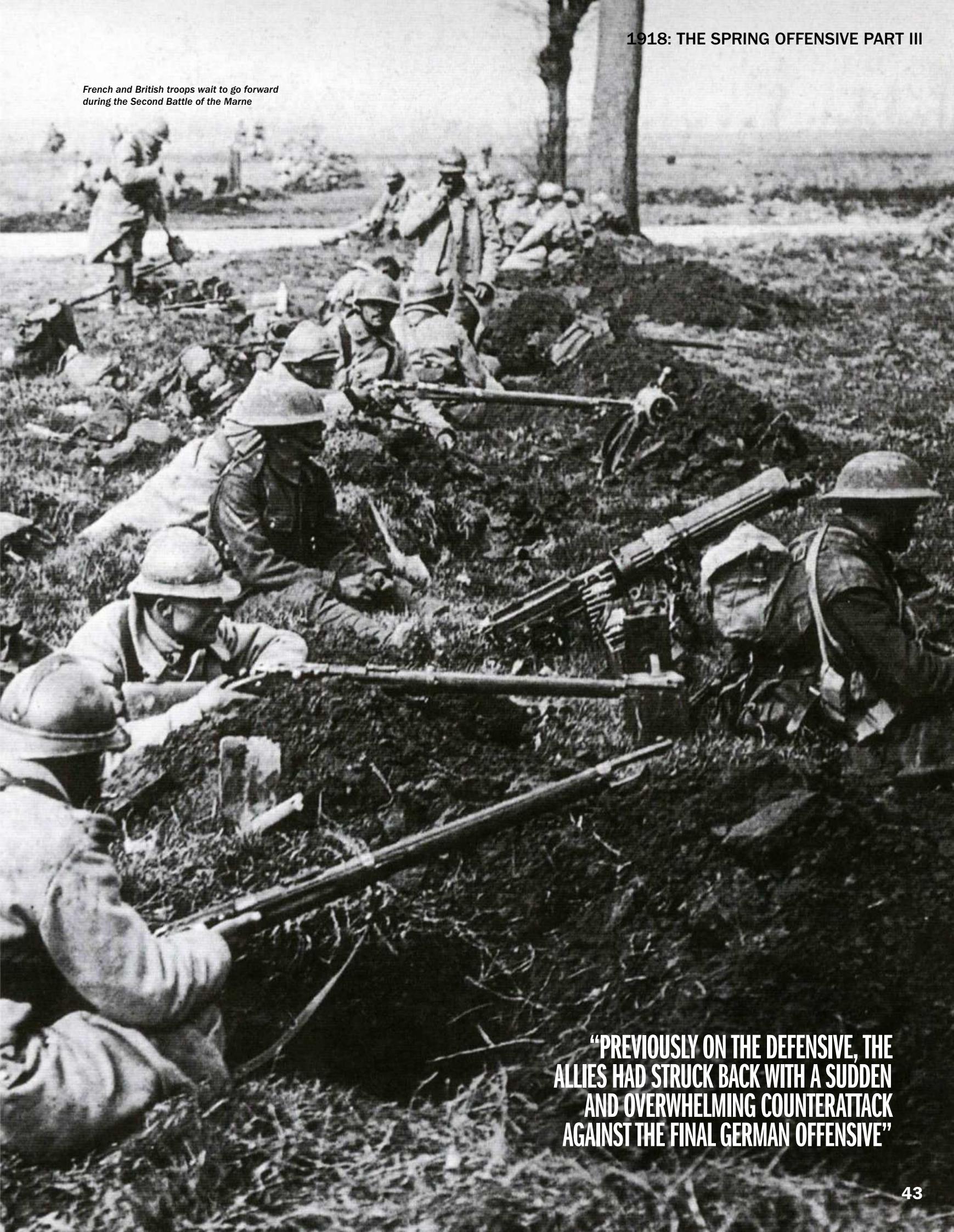
Ludendorff himself still believed the army had the strength and motivation to counterattack. In the Battle of Tardenois from 20 July, Italian and British troops attached to French Fifth Army attempted to penetrate the left (eastern) flank of the salient along the valley of the River Ardre but were met with fierce resistance, as the Germans struggled to prevent the Allied noose closing around the troops withdrawing from their centre. In the last week of July the salient was pulled back as the Germans tried to establish a new line along the River Ourcq. Mangin's army attacked again on 1 August. Although there was less success against a reinforced German line

Renault FT17s were capable of keeping up with infantry during offensives



General Charles Mangin, commander of the Tenth Army in the Battle of Soissons, planning an operation

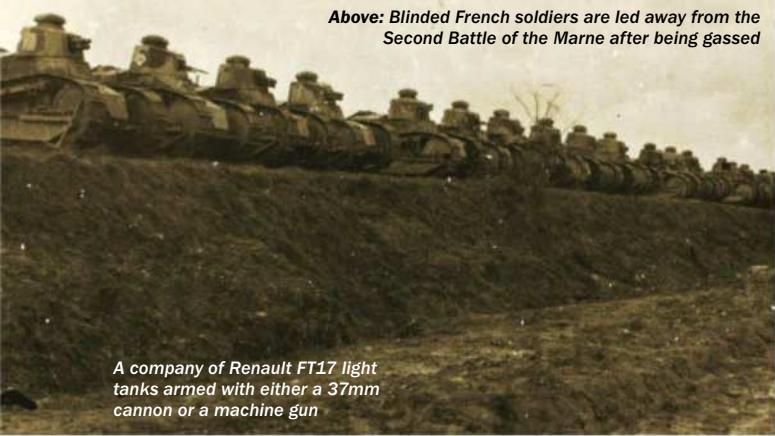
French and British troops wait to go forward during the Second Battle of the Marne



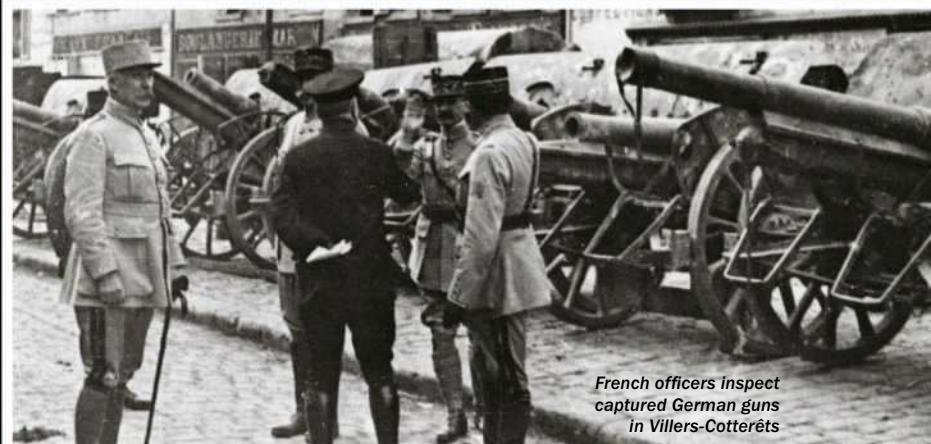
“PREVIOUSLY ON THE DEFENSIVE, THE ALLIES HAD STRUCK BACK WITH A SUDDEN AND OVERWHELMING COUNTERATTACK AGAINST THE FINAL GERMAN OFFENSIVE”



Above: Blinded French soldiers are led away from the Second Battle of the Marne after being gassed



A company of Renault FT17 light tanks armed with either a 37mm cannon or a machine gun



French officers inspect captured German guns in Villers-Cotterêts

than on 20 July, the attack put enough pressure on the enemy to make them shorten their line again. The front stabilised along the line of the rivers Aisne and Vesle. Soissons was liberated and Paris was no longer threatened.

Within three weeks, Allied troops had driven the Germans from the Marne salient, recovering much of the ground lost since May and inflicting heavy casualties – around 168,000. In particular, the large number of prisoners taken – almost 30,000 – indicated that the fight was going out of the enemy's troops. The Second Battle of the Marne was an Allied success without precedent and demonstrated that the tide had now turned. But it did not necessarily mean that the war would end quickly.

The German army that returned to the defensive was still powerful – it had demonstrated its defensive prowess for three years between 1915 and 1917 – although its fighting power had been seriously depleted in its own offensive operations. The Spanish flu pandemic, which reached France in the spring and was ravaging the German army come July, would also take a heavy toll on the weakened German soldiers.

In an attritional war, who could fill the ranks for the longest would ultimately determine the outcome, and by this point German reserves were in short supply. The new recruits of the

“GERMAN RESERVES WERE IN SHORT SUPPLY. THE NEW RECRUITS OF THE 1919 CLASS WERE ALREADY AT THE FRONT”

1919 class were already at the front and the only other source of reserves was recovered wounded men and ‘comb-outs’ from the rear areas – men previously classified as unfit for frontline service. Moreover, morale was weakening and there was a growing problem of desertion and shirking in the army’s rear areas.

The Allies were running short of men too. Facing manpower shortages, British divisions had been reorganised from 12 to nine infantry battalions over the winter of 1917–18 and, under pressure in the spring, the age of frontline service for conscripts had been reduced from 19 to 18 and a half. In a sign of political instability as the military crisis deepened in the spring, Prime Minister David Lloyd George had to face criticism in parliament that he’d deliberately starved the army of men to restrain Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig’s attacking tendencies. For the Allies, however, American ‘Doughboys’ in ever growing numbers would redress manpower shortages if they could be

made fighting efficient. The first formed divisions had fought on the Marne with enthusiasm if limited skill, but once properly trained and led they would become a huge asset.

The Allies’ other asset was Foch, who was awarded his marshal’s baton at the end of the Second Battle of the Marne, in which he had demonstrated his control of all Allied forces. Through the difficult spring and early summer the generalissimo had been awaiting the moment when he could strike back with effect. Now that he had regained the initiative he intended to press his advantage. In late summer and autumn 1918 Foch would rain his own series of blows all along the Western Front. His strategy was based on a careful assessment of the relative size and fighting capacity of the opposing armies. He knew that with American assistance his forces would increase in strength, while Ludendorff’s could only shrink.

Now that the counter-offensive was underway it had to continue almost without respite so that Ludendorff had no time to rest and refit his broken divisions. Even as the battle on the Marne was winding down, Foch had been preparing his next masterful blow, which would strike in front of Amiens on 8 August 1918, Ludendorff’s infamous ‘black day of the German army’, from which Foch’s general offensive rolled on to victory in three months.

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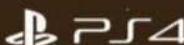
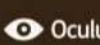


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Heroes of the Medal of Honor

CHARLES L. THOMAS

Fighting a desperate battle against strong German positions at the French town of Climbach in December 1944, Charles L. Thomas led his troops of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion with valour

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

The objective was the town of Climbach, France, usually a quiet, picturesque locale in the northern Vosges mountains. On 14 December 1944, however, the prospect of entering Climbach was anything but appealing.

World War II was in its fifth year, and the American Seventh Army had battled its way eastward, sluggishly at times, as the conflict reached the German frontier and the enemy fought tenaciously in defence of their homeland. The cold wind swept across the forested and mountainous landscape as the troops of Task Force Blackshear drew up to their staging area, preparing for an assault to capture Climbach, where a defending concentration of tanks, guns and infantry of the battle-hardened 21st Panzer Division was expected to put up a ferocious fight.

Lieutenant Colonel John Blackshear had been assigned the task of taking Climbach, and his assembled strength included a platoon of M4 Sherman medium tanks from the 14th Armored Division, a company of the 411th Regiment, 103rd Infantry Division, a heavy weapons platoon that brought firepower with mortars and machine guns, and the Third Platoon, Company C, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion (towed).

As 24-year-old Lieutenant Charles L. Thomas mounted an M20 scout utility vehicle to lead the initial probe towards Climbach, he was under no illusions that a difficult engagement was ahead. Commanding the men of Company C and their four 76.2mm (three-inch) anti-tank guns, his M20 was in the vanguard of the advance.

By December 1944 the soldiers of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion were no strangers to the battlefield. They had come ashore in France in October and engaged in combat for the first time during attempts by General George S. Patton Jr.'s Third Army to capture the fortress city of Metz. On 5 December the unit had been reassigned to the Seventh Army's 103rd Infantry Division.

Still, another kind of adversity was ever looming, sometimes in the shadows of the business at hand, sometimes blatant and terribly offensive, but always there. The United States remained a segregated nation, and

in the American South the era of Jim Crow dominated nearly every aspect of everyday living. The US Army was a mirror of society, and the all-black 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion was a segregated unit.

While its other ranks were African-American, the majority of its officers were white. Black soldiers during World War II were often relegated to menial tasks – cooking, doing laundry, construction, loading and unloading. Although a few African-American units had been trained for combat, they had to overcome prejudice in the upper echelons of the army command structure. Often, white officers simply did not want black troops under their command in the field. The situation was difficult to say the least, and the American military was not desegregated until President Harry S. Truman finally ordered an end to discrimination in 1948.

Lieutenant Thomas and the Third Platoon moved out. Heading westward towards Climbach, the Americans rounded a curve along the road over La Schleife hill and crested the high ground about 275 metres (300 yards) from the town. Immediately they came under terrific fire from 88mm multi-purpose artillery and German tanks, while at least a company of panzergrenadiers steadily fired machine guns, rifles and shoulder-borne anti-tank weapons. The enemy force was dug in along high ground from 400-490 metres (1,300-1,600 feet) above and about 640 metres (700 yards) distant. A brisk exchange of small arms accompanied the crash of German mortars and heavy guns. One



His right arm in a sling, Captain Charles L. Thomas receives the Distinguished Service Cross from Brigadier General Joseph E. Bastion



An officer of the
614th Tank Destroyer
Battalion, Charles L.
Thomas discharged his
duties under fire while
seriously wounded

**"I WAS JUST TRYING TO
STAY ALIVE OUT THERE....
I KNOW I HUNG ONTO
ONE THOUGHT, DEPLOY
THE GUNS AND START
FIRING OR WE'RE DEAD"**

Charles L. Thomas

"IN THE TRADITION OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM AS FAR BACK AS BUNKER HILL, THEY WERE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING FOR FREEDOM EVEN THOUGH FREEDOM'S FULLNESS WAS DENIED TO THEM"

President Bill Clinton awarding Medals of Honor in 1997

American recalled that the first indication of the presence of the enemy was the blast of several high-explosive rounds from camouflaged German positions.

An enemy shell scored a direct hit on Thomas's M20 and he was seriously wounded. Ignoring his own injuries, the lieutenant maintained the presence of mind to halt the trailing column and then assist in pulling other wounded crewmen to relative safety. In the process, Thomas was exposed to heavy enemy fire and sustained further wounds to his legs, arms and chest. He ordered his anti-tank guns to deploy and begin returning fire, and the soldiers obeyed, setting up in an open field that provided virtually no cover from the punishing German fire, but was the only nearby location where their guns could unlimber. He handed over command to a subordinate officer only after he was sure that the situation was under control.

Two of the 614th's guns were knocked out within minutes, and a third was silenced later, but the fourth continued to hit back at the enemy, providing a base of covering fire as the accompanying infantry and tanks executed a flanking movement in an attempt to dislodge the defenders. The gun crews lost eight of ten men, and the Third Platoon remained engaged for four hours. The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion lost 50 per cent of its strength killed and wounded. The heroism of the 614th, as its men stood to their guns, allowed the flanking movement to succeed with the support of a rolling artillery barrage, and the town was in American hands later in the day.

The 103rd Division after-action report described the sacrifice of Lieutenant Thomas and the men under his command at Climbach as an "outstanding performance of mass heroism on the part of the officers and men of Company C, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, [which] precluded a near catastrophic reverse for the task force." Lieutenant Colonel Blackshear recommended Thomas for the Distinguished Service Cross, and the 614th received a Distinguished Unit Citation – the first for the 103rd Division and the first for an African-American unit in World War II. For individual actions on that memorable day, four other soldiers of the 614th earned the Silver Star – two of them posthumously – and nine received the Bronze Star.

Thomas was evacuated to a field hospital, then to a hospital in Britain, and subsequently returned to the United States, where he underwent physical rehabilitation and convalescence in Michigan, close to his family home in Detroit. Accounts of his heroism splashed across the local newspapers, but Thomas shunned the celebrity status that

was being thrust upon him. When asked about the events at Climbach, he responded, "I know I was sent out to locate and draw the enemy fire, but I didn't mean to draw that much."

In March 1945 Brigadier General Joseph E. Bastion, commander of Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, presented the Distinguished Service Cross to Thomas, who was also promoted to captain. He was only the second black soldier to receive the Distinguished Service Cross, and a sizable crowd gathered for the event, including leaders of the black community in Detroit and local government officials. At the time of the ceremony, Thomas was still recovering from severe wounds. Three fingers on his right hand were unable to bend, he lost a portion of his right arm, and he recalled that his stomach looked like a roadmap, as it was criss-crossed with the scars from many stitches.

An article that appeared in *Yank* magazine on 23 February 1945 praised the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalions's action at Climbach. Lieutenant Colonel Frank Pritchard, who had succeeded Blackshear as its commanding officer, commented, "If you only knew how... proud I am of my boys." Pritchard was one of six white officers in the battalion at the time; the others were black. "They're all proud of the 614th, from the division CG [commanding general] down," The *Yank* reporter continued. "The division CG is supposed to have said he'd fight like hell if anyone tried to take the 614th TD away from him."

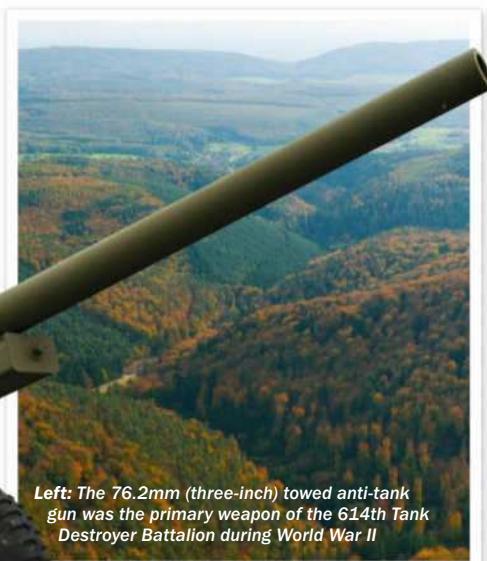
Meanwhile, the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion served through to the end of World War II in Europe. Elements participated in the seizure of the Brenner Pass in Austria during the last week of the conflict and linked up with the 88th Infantry Division advancing from Italy. The soldiers of the 614th received eight Silver Stars, 28 Bronze Stars and 79 Purple Hearts during their service in combat.

Thomas was unable to return to his unit before the end of the war but remained in the army until 1947, retiring with the rank of major. Although many observers believed that his actions at Climbach merited the Medal of Honor, the racism that pervaded the US military during the 1940s precluded

Charles L. Thomas rode in an M20 armoured utility car similar to this vehicle during the engagement on 14 December 1944



Below: The mountainous northern Vosges near Climbach, France, presented difficult terrain during the advance of American forces in the winter of 1944



Left: The 76.2mm (three-inch) towed anti-tank gun was the primary weapon of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion during World War II





him from receiving the country's highest award for bravery in battle. Circumstances were to remain unchanged for another 50 years, and Thomas's valour, like that of numerous other black soldiers, faded into obscurity.

After his discharge from the army, Thomas talked little about his wartime experiences. He married in 1949, worked as a missile technician at Selfridge Field, an airbase in Mount Clemens, Michigan, and as a computer programmer for the Internal Revenue Service. He tinkered with automobiles while also building television sets in the basement of his home. Although he rarely mentioned his military service, his son recalled occasional visits with soldiers that Thomas had known during World War II. Many of them were shocked to see him alive, believing that he had died in a hail of German gunfire at Climbach. "People who saw him thought they saw a ghost," said his son. A nephew was surprised to learn of his uncle's heroism and commented, "When I found out he was a hero, I tried to get him to talk about it, but he wouldn't."

"ONLY AFTER HE WAS CERTAIN THAT HIS JUNIOR OFFICER WAS IN FULL CONTROL OF THE SITUATION DID HE PERMIT HIMSELF TO BE EVACUATED"

Medal of Honor citation

Thomas died of cancer in 1980 at the age of 59. From there, his story might have ended, despite his exceptional service, as one of 1.2 million black Americans who wore their nation's uniform during World War II. However, half a century after the end of the war the exploits of the young lieutenant at Climbach and those of other black heroes of the conflict came to light once again. In 1995 the research of a select

team of historians and US Army personnel surrounding the heroism of these men was published after a three-year assessment. The conclusion was clear: seven black soldiers had been denied the Medal of Honor simply because of their race.

Subsequently, President Bill Clinton presented the Medal of Honor to these deserving heroes. One of them, 77-year-old Vernon Baker, was still alive to receive his long-overdue recognition at the White House on 13 January 1997. The president remarked that each recipient had acted selflessly "at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty. In the greatest struggle in human history, they helped lead the forces of freedom to victory."

For Charles Thomas and his family, the long road to well-deserved recognition had become a microcosm of the societal changes slowly taking effect in the USA. The black soldiers who gave their lives, were grievously wounded, or otherwise served with distinction in WWII demonstrated that, in the midst of battle with lives on the line, the relevance of race was diminished.

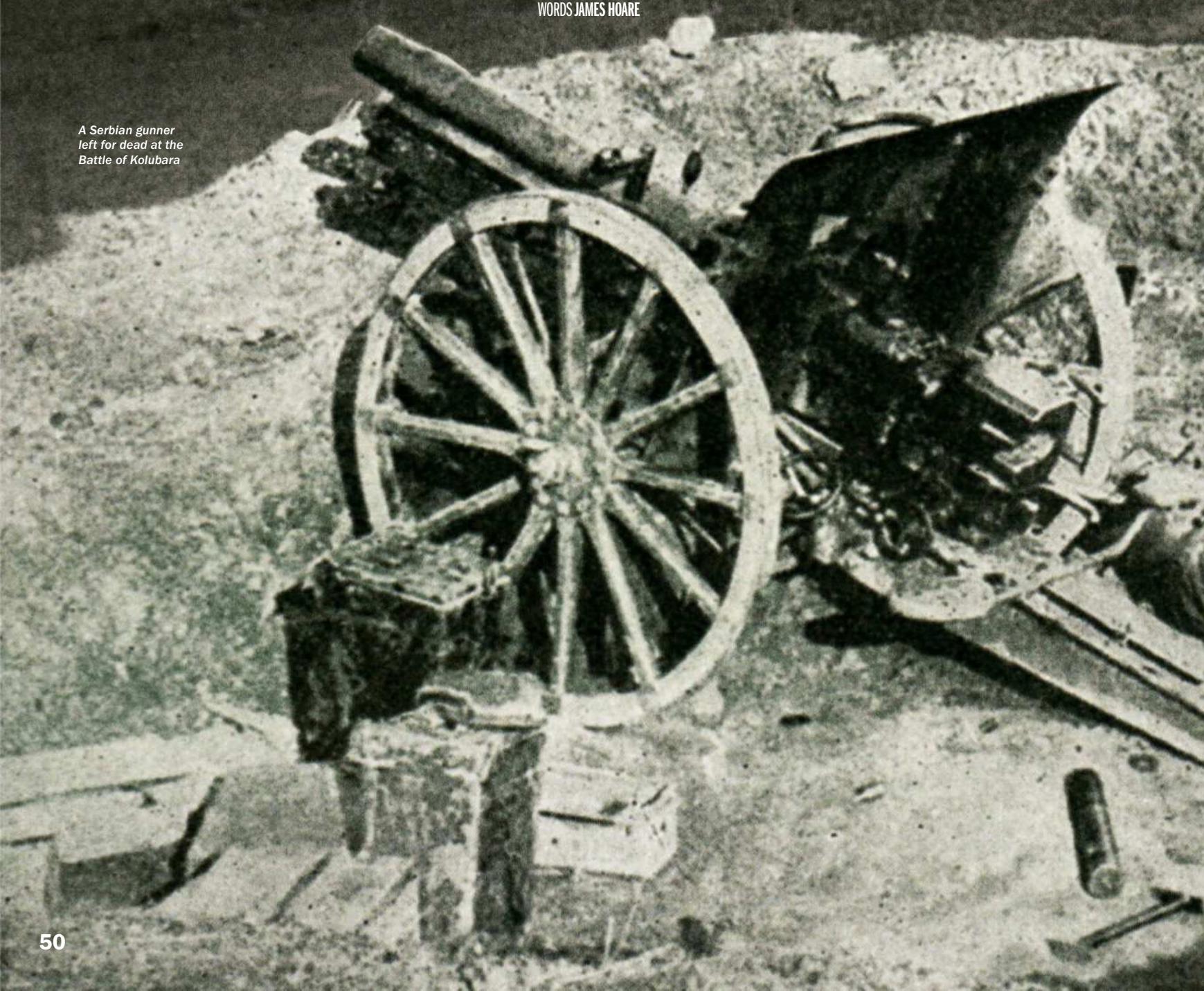
SERBIA'S BLOODYMINDED 1914: PART III

THE HIGH PRICE OF VICTORY

As winter swept down through the Balkans the end was approaching for Austria-Hungary's campaign – fighting not just for wounded national pride but for the survival of the old order against a new kind of warfare. Meanwhile, for weary Serbia, defeat seemed inevitable and victory impossible

WORDS JAMES HOARE

A Serbian gunner
left for dead at the
Battle of Kolubara



As October set in, bringing with it chill and cholera, the static trench warfare favoured the better-equipped men of the KuK (Kaiserlich und Königlich, Imperial and Royal Army). They could draw on field kitchens and field hospitals, entrenching tools and winter clothing, and most crucially artillery, which rumbled away at the spluttering Serbian lines. The lack of cannon left Serbian positions so hideously exposed that some trenches were moved within metres of the Habsburg lines to deter bombardment – the risk of small arms fire or raids from their near neighbours was the lesser threat compared with sitting under a waterfall of high explosives.

The cold and rain chose no side. The swollen Drina rose and flooded the Austro-Hungarian Fifth Army's trenches, allowing the Serbs to carve off some of the sodden Macva bridgehead, while high in the mountains many Serbian territorials stood guard in bare feet, the cold and the damp having long disintegrated their flimsy leather opanci. The Serbian Campaign of 1914 was approaching its end, one way or another.

The cold road back

Eventually, with General Stepan 'Stepa' Stepanovic offering his resignation in protest at the lack of shells – a heated discussion ending with its rejection and his point made – the Second Army was allowed to withdraw to shorten its line and mount a stronger defence. With the Serbian retreat, commander of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan Army, Oskar Potiorek, finally had breathing space to plan his next move. Replenished and re-armed, the 285,000-strong KuK Balkan Army renewed its offensive on 6 November after a thunderous two-hour bombardment, forcing the weary Serbs into a fighting retreat so severe that, in an urgent summit on 8 November, Serbian Chief-of-Staff Radomir Putnik suggested negotiating for peace.

As a chunk of western Serbia fell to the Fifth and Sixth Army invasion, France was urgently petitioned for arms to keep its Balkan partner fighting. France caved. Shells would be sent overland via Greece, but that would take time.

Fear of Austro-Hungarian reprisal saw the civilian population flee the occupied west with the army, slowing the retreat into a quagmire as thick as the roads. Men recruited from

those villages (most of them with the Third Army) deserted to rejoin their families, causing the already pitiful Serbian morale to sink even further into the mud. Between 28 October and 13 November some 63,017 men left their posts.

Deaf to the mood, King Petar I called Putnik to make him aware of his intentions to visit the front on 9 November and see the war for himself. Putnik replied with alarming frankness: "You cannot visit the front your highness... because there you will hear that the soldiers curse you, [Prime Minister] Pašić, and me."

An officer of the Morava I division observed, "We know we have no artillery ammunition, and we know that every position is temporary, and that an order for withdrawal will come quickly. Exhaustion is great among us all, because we march by night and fortify positions by day." The First, Second and Third Armies took up new positions on the right flank of the Ljib and Kolubara rivers on 11 November. Train tracks, roads, bridges, telegraph and telephone lines were pulled down or torn up in their wake, and livestock was requisitioned, to deny the invaders any advantage. The next day snow began to fall, slowing the progress

"EXHAUSTION IS GREAT AMONG US ALL, BECAUSE WE MARCH BY NIGHT AND FORTIFY POSITIONS BY DAY"



of the Fifth and Sixth Army as roads became indistinguishable from the slurry.

It was a vast front, stretching from the mouth of the Kolubara, where it met the Danube and Sava east of Belgrade, to the slopes of Suvobor and Malje in the centre of the country.

The 19,000-strong Defence of Belgrade held the rightmost flank of the Serbian lines with 47 cannon. Then came Stepanovic's Second Army, now numbering 67,000 men and 138 cannon. In the centre was General Pavle Jurišić-Šturm's Third Army, numbering 53,000 and 80 cannon, while the First Army fought from the mountains with 44,000 men and 80 cannon. Further south, the territorial Užice Army of 25,000 men and 55 cannon protected the First's flank, relying more on geography than force of arms. With numbers now severely depleted, it was approximately one man for every metre of the front.

On 14 November General Petar Bojovic – whose wound from Srem had failed to heal, leaving him incapacitated and unable to command – was replaced by General Živojin Mišić as commander of the First Army. Like his peers at the head of the Second and Third Armies, Mišić had led men in the Serbo-Turkish Wars of 1876-78 and Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885. As Putnik's aide in the First Balkan War (1912-13) and Second Balkan War (1913), he could also draw on an understanding of the broad sweeps of strategy. Mišić's balance of big picture and battlefield nous would serve Serbia well in the Battle of Kolubara.

The beginning of the end

In 1804, the town of Valjevo on the west bank of the Kolubara sparked the First Serbian Uprising against Ottoman rule. Knezes (Dukes) Ilija Bircanin and Alekса Nenadović were decapitated for conspiring against the sultan and their heads were put on display. More deaths would follow Bircanin and Nenadović. The 'Slaughter of the Knezes' triggered a nine-year insurgency against Serbia's Turkish occupiers. On 16 November the XV Corps entered the deserted streets of Valjevo, while the rest of the Sixth Army reached the Kolubara River to claim scalps of their own. It's unlikely the Austro-Hungarians gave the history of this land the slightest consideration, but if they did they might have pondered the character of a people able to derive so much purpose from suffering, able to fight for so long and with such futility against impossible odds, and to die so willingly for the dream of Serbia.

Using the elite mountain troops of the XV and XVI Corps, the Sixth Army was tasked to force the Kolubara, push the Serbs from the high ground and take the strategically vital railway beyond. The river was high with melted snow, and the banks had burst to flood the fields either side. With the Kolubara as their moat, the Rudnik mountains were the densely forested ramparts from which Serbia's First Army dug in, holding the KuK for a few days before withdrawing on the night of 21-22 November to the Suvobor ridge. To General Mišić's mind



Austro-Hungarian soldiers stand beside captured Serbian guns

this was the ideal redoubt for a counterattack to regain their recently vacated lines, but a disastrous attempt by Maljen detachment cost them so dearly that the First Army was forced to withdraw, lest its depleted manpower leave the whole front vulnerable.

On 23 November the weather worsened, muffling operations along the entire line. Mountain streams became raging torrents, snow drifts blocked roads, and newly dug trenches filled with mud and water as quickly as they were excavated. For five days fires

REPRISAL AND RETRIBUTION

THE WAR'S HIGHLY CHARGED ORIGINS MADE ATROCITY ALMOST INEVITABLE

The war in the Balkans began as a war apart. From the moment Franz Ferdinand was assassinated the mood in the Austro-Hungarian Empire turned poisonous for Serbs, who were seen as irredentists and fifth columnists.

Before they even saw the border, the men of the Balkan Army believed that the rules of civilised warfare had already been discarded – the attack on the Habsburg heir was a criminal act by a barbarous people. Rightly or wrongly, they held the Serbian state directly responsible for the murder.

Serbian nationalist and pan-Slav organisations such as Mlada Bosna, which Franz Ferdinand's assassins had belonged to, were active within Bosnia and Herzegovina and were being supported by elements within the Belgrade military establishment. As a multi-ethnic entity keeping a lid on myriad interest groups, the Serbian way of war represented an existential threat to the Dual Monarchy.

Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, German-Swiss criminologist Dr Archibald Reiss was commissioned by the Serbian government to investigate war crimes committed by the Austro-Hungarians (and as such his findings must be viewed as politically loaded). The results make for grim reading should you seek it out: slaughtered children left for the dogs, women raped and mutilated, a crowd bayoneted outside of a church, and hostages taken as protection against insurgents. Even taking into account Reiss's bias,

much of this is a matter of record. As Austro-Hungarian soldiers stepped onto the part of their mental map marked "Here be Dragons", paranoia and suspicion were constant.

An order issued to the IX Corps read, "During the whole course of the war the greatest severity, the greatest harshness and the greatest mistrust be observed towards everyone. In the first place I will not allow inhabitants of the enemy's country, armed but not in uniform, who are met either alone or in groups, to be taken prisoners. No consideration is to prevent their execution."

The "greatest mistrust" is understandable, even if the consequences are not. Serbs in Habsburg lands crossed the border to enlist with the Serbian

"DURING THE WHOLE COURSE OF THE WAR THE GREATEST SEVERITY, THE GREATEST HARSHNESS AND THE GREATEST MISTRUST BE OBSERVED TOWARDS EVERYONE"

Images: Library of Congress



Left: The horrendous wound caused by an Austro-Hungarian Einschusspatronen round

"IN THE FOG AND MISERY, SERBS CONTINUED TO DESERT OR WAIT NUMBLY FOR A CHANCE TO SURRENDER"

could not be lit. In the fog and misery, Serbs continued to desert or wait numbly for a chance to surrender, and the Užice Army was chased from the town that bears its name.

Putnik finally realised that Belgrade would be impossible to defend as the line shortened, and not only would the city be lost but the flanks of the Second Army would be left dangerously exposed. He issued new orders to withdraw the Defence of Belgrade to new lines 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of the capital once its position became obviously untenable.

When required to inform the Serbian government of the decision on 26 November, Putnik snarled at the minister of war, "It's not my fault that the capital is placed there, where a frontier blockhouse used to be." Another Serbian withdrawal followed on the 28 November after another detachment was flung needlessly at the Habsburg forces. Later that day the Fifth Army broke onto Suvobor and, despite protests from Putnik, Mišić withdrew again and began to fortify a new defensive position further back at Gornji Milanovac.



Serbian civilians hanged by the Austro-Hungarians, location unknown

Army, roving bands of Chetnik irregulars prowled behind the lines, local Serb populations in Bosnia and Srem reported on troop movements, and even the territorial army detachments defending the border must have contributed to this sense of dread. Mainly teenagers and old men, most without uniforms, third line territorials would have given the average Austro-Hungarian infantryman the impression that this whole country had risen up against him. Even Reiss acknowledged that the 'innocent' may not have been, writing that "the worst that can be said against the civilian combatants is that they were defending their country." Again, one cannot excuse the character of the Austro-Hungarian response, but the Hague Convention of 1907 left a considerable grey area for the treatment of combatants outside of uniform and recognisable army hierarchy.

These atrocities were almost certainly reciprocated. Many Serbian units were veterans of the earlier Balkan Wars, which had shocked the rest of Europe with its violence towards civilians, prisoners and the wounded. As they moved into territory abandoned by the enemy and saw the trail of murder, rape, desecration and arson, any German, Hungarian or Croat civilians remaining would have been targets of the same.

Where the Hague Convention was unambiguous, though, was in the use of rounds that expand or explode upon impact, causing horrific wounds. Austro-Hungarian Einschusspatrone (aiming bullet) rounds contained a cylinder of mercury fulminate and were designed for ranging machine guns against its small but bright explosion. Along with the spent cartridges and infantry captured carrying five rounds apiece, Reiss published photographs showing the rounds' gruesome impression on the human body.

THE BALKAN BALANCE OF POWER IN 1914

BEYOND SERBIA'S BORDERS, OLD RIVALRIES AND AMBITIONS WERE BEGINNING TO SURFACE



Putnik was urging counterattack after counterattack and demanding each withdrawal be the last, but Mišić was quickly realising that the fighting retreat was bleeding the First Army dry. They needed to regroup.

By 29 November the Second Army was reported to be arresting 50 deserters a day. The number who left the front unmolested is unknown, but the chaos behind the lines was approaching critical mass. Serbian gendarmes were unable to prevent large mobs of armed men from flooding railway stations, looting, throwing hand grenades and causing panic among the civilian population.

Many regiments at the front were down to a third of their original strength, some refused to fight at all, and at least one was reported to have turned its guns on the officers in threat.

Opportunity squandered

Despite judging – relatively astutely – that the Serbs were “poorly supplied” and “there are a great many ill, some 5,000 mostly frostbitten”, the Habsburg Balkan Army was pressured to seize a political victory rather than press the advantage and take a battlefield one. Fifth Army was ordered northeast to take Belgrade, then sweep south to encircle Serbia’s Third Army, while Sixth Army held the line on Kolubara.

The Fifth and Sixth Armies needed rest too. They had been fighting uphill through snow and rain for nearly a month, and their supply lines from Bosnia and Herzegovina were stretched thin along sodden roads and mountain passes. Men surrendering to the Serbs admitted to not having tasted bread in five days, their once envied winter clothing now threadbare.

In this eerie stillness between the large-scale movements, shells had begun to arrive from neutral-but-friendly Greece: 20,000 Greek shells purchased by France on Serbia’s behalf, followed by around 40,000 French shells shipped from Marseille. The latter were longer than those used by the Serbian Army. They had to be broken down and reassembled by munitions workers – the final stage in a fragile supply train that saw them race against Bulgarian guerillas on their journey up from Thessaloniki.

On 3 December, as the Fifth Army marched down the streets of Belgrade in full pomp, Serbia launched a counterattack across its entire front.

An artist's impression of the devastation unleashed on KuK lines by Serbian artillery during the Battle of Kolubara



“HUGE NUMBERS OF HABSBURG TROOPS SURRENDERED AND IN THE FIRST DAY ALONE THE FIRST ARMY TOOK 400 PRISONERS”

Mišić’s plan was for the First Army to retake Suvobor ridge and push on to Valjevo, cutting the Austro-Hungarian front in two. The Second and Third Army, meanwhile, would maintain pressure on the rest of the line, leaving the enemy unable to divert men to shore up the rapidly collapsing centre. In the meantime, the Užice Army would recommence its banditry in the highlands. Putnik agreed: the Serbian Army was fundamentally better suited to an offensive campaign than a defensive one. For the first time since the summer, the First Army was rested, resupplied and reinforced. Its depleted ranks were filled by gendarmes, conscripts from the ‘new’ territories of Macedonia and Kosovo, and by officer cadets taken prematurely from the military academy and given the rank of corporal in the reasonable belief that a half-trained CO would make a half-decent NCO.

The “1,300 Corporals” were all well-educated young men from Serbia’s middle and upper classes who had enlisted at the outbreak of war. Addressed personally by Crown Prince Aleksandar before they left for the front, the effect on the First Army’s morale was

instantaneous. Britain’s *Observer* newspaper gushed, “This is the only example in history where a small country, Serbia, sends its flowers into war, into fighting units. Its future. Its whole intellectual youth, as a last hope for the country’s salvation.”

The end of the beginning

Subjected for the first time in the entire campaign to a large-scale artillery barrage, the Sixth Army was completely wrong-footed by its opponent’s sudden change in disposition. Mišić’s First Army swept through the undulating valleys and slopes of Suvobor, cutting off KuK detachments from each other and forcing them to either surrender or fight to break out and flee.

Huge numbers of Habsburg troops surrendered, and in the first day alone the First Army took 400 prisoners, four mountain guns and 1,000 shells. By 4 December all three KuK divisions on Suvobor had broken at least once during the fighting. An officer in Timok II detachment recorded the aftermath of a Serbian bombardment: “We passed along the trenches where the Austrians were. Dead – soldier upon soldier, all from shrapnel.”

Realising that the heart was being punched out of his offensive and the whole enterprise was now at risk, on 6 December Potiorek ordered the Sixth back across the Kolubara. Elsewhere along the front, the Third Army followed the First in pushing the enemy back in almost total panic, while the Second Army failed to achieve the same level of success.

Instead they were ordered to halt and Timok I division was transferred to the Defence of Belgrade, which was reporting an ominous build-up of troops to the north.

Potiorek's planned manoeuvre was now complete and the Fifth was finally ready to strike, but it was already too late. By 11 December the First Army had taken up position in Valjevo and was ordered to halt while the Second and Third Army moved to reclaim the capital.

True to form, Mišić ignored Putnik's orders and the First Army chased the invaders back towards the Drina and Sava rivers, a trail of weapons, wounded and supplies littered behind their flight from the battlefield. Meeting little resistance, in the final three days of the Battle of Kolubara, the First Army took 11,550 prisoners, 82 artillery pieces and everything from motorcars to field kitchens.

The panicked AOK (Armeeoberkommando, Army High Command) realised that if the Fifth Army was wiped out, the whole southern border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would be undefended. Now down to fewer than 40,000 men, Potiorek left the decision to the Fifth Army's Liborius Ritter von Frank on whether to fight on and hold Belgrade, or flee. He issued the order to evacuate at noon on 14 December. The next day, at 10.45am the bridges across the Sava to the Austro-Hungarian Empire were dynamited.

Five months earlier, the KuK Balkan Army had numbered around 450,000. Now some 273,805 men had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. On the Serbian side the casualties numbered 165,557, while 2,000 homes had been razed and looted, and the infrastructure of western Serbia in ruins. Typhus, cholera and diphtheria were rife on both sides, carried back to Bosnia and Herzegovina by retreating troops, and an incalculable number of Serbian civilians had

been butchered in retaliation by the KuK. And for what? With a few exceptions along the upper Drina, the borders remained unchanged.

Martyrdom denied

French Commander-in-Chief Joseph Joffre was full of admiration of the Serbian defence of 1914: "The delicate manoeuvres on Cer and Kolubara, which were conducted with confident judgement, with freedom of spirit and strength that exhibits the mastery of Serbian command, deserve to occupy a great place in our strategic studies," he wrote.

Debates about political rather than military control of strategy is one that often surrounds the French in WWI, but for a potent example look no further than Potiorek. Potiorek should be remembered as a provincial bureaucrat in the colourful brocade of a toy soldier. He repeatedly subordinated tactical decisions to ideological objectives, from the decision in August to cross at a point that afforded the defender the maximum advantage all the way through to his hubris in Belgrade in December, telegramming his victory to the emperor and appointing a governor for "occupied Serbia" while the battle turned against him.

Serbia's commanders were just as capable of folly as their Habsburg counterparts, but their individual self-confidence is what ultimately turned the tide. Putnik was unafraid of voicing his demands and pushing back against ministers and monarchs based on the reality of the situation, and men like Mišić, Stepanović and Jurišić-Šturm had the conviction to challenge their voivode and seize the initiative.

With his position at the head of the Balkan Army now utterly untenable, Potiorek offered his resignation, and it was accepted with the

Image: DNB

Oskar Potiorek's career was doomed by the failure of the Serbian Campaign

suggestion – according to some sources – that he take his own life. He replied "I will. I will kill myself, but I will only do so when another Austrian general defeats the Serbian Army."

By the time battle rejoined in 1915, Austria-Hungary was firmly the junior partner in its own war. No general of the KuK would even have the freedom or responsibility that Potiorek enjoyed and squandered. Instead, Serbia's defeat would be Berlin's triumph.



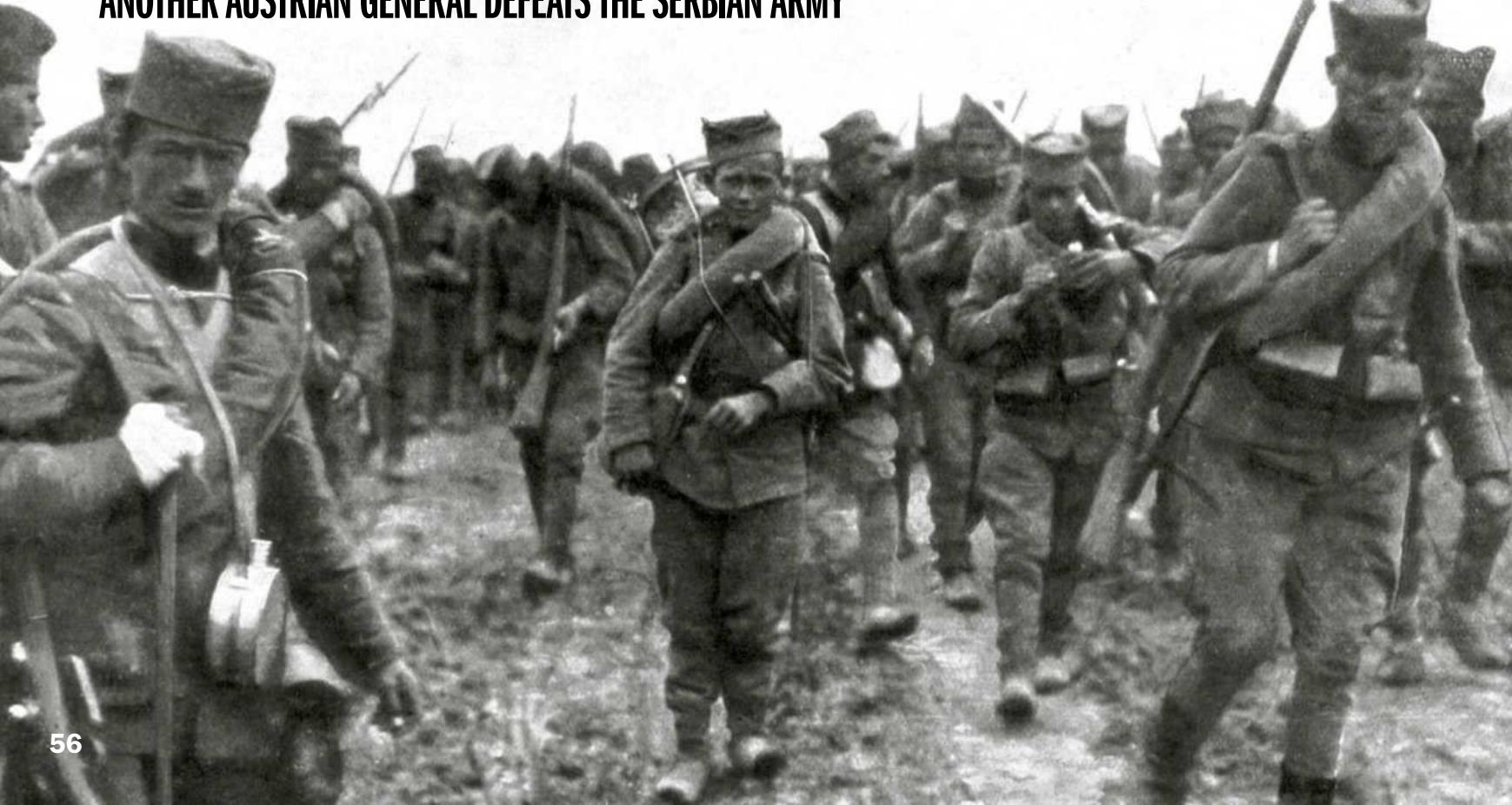
FURTHER READING

- ★ THE EASTERN FRONT 1914-1920: FROM TANNENBERG TO THE RUSSO-POLISH WAR
- ★ SERBIA AND THE BALKAN FRONT, 1914: THE OUTBREAK OF THE GREAT WAR
- ★ THE SERBIAN ARMY IN THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918

Images: Alamy, Getty

"I WILL. I WILL KILL MYSELF, BUT I WILL ONLY DO SO WHEN ANOTHER AUSTRIAN GENERAL DEFEATS THE SERBIAN ARMY"

Young recruits of the Serbian army on the move during the bloody campaign of 1914





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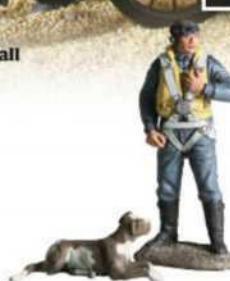
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B25018 RAF Commemorative
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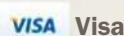
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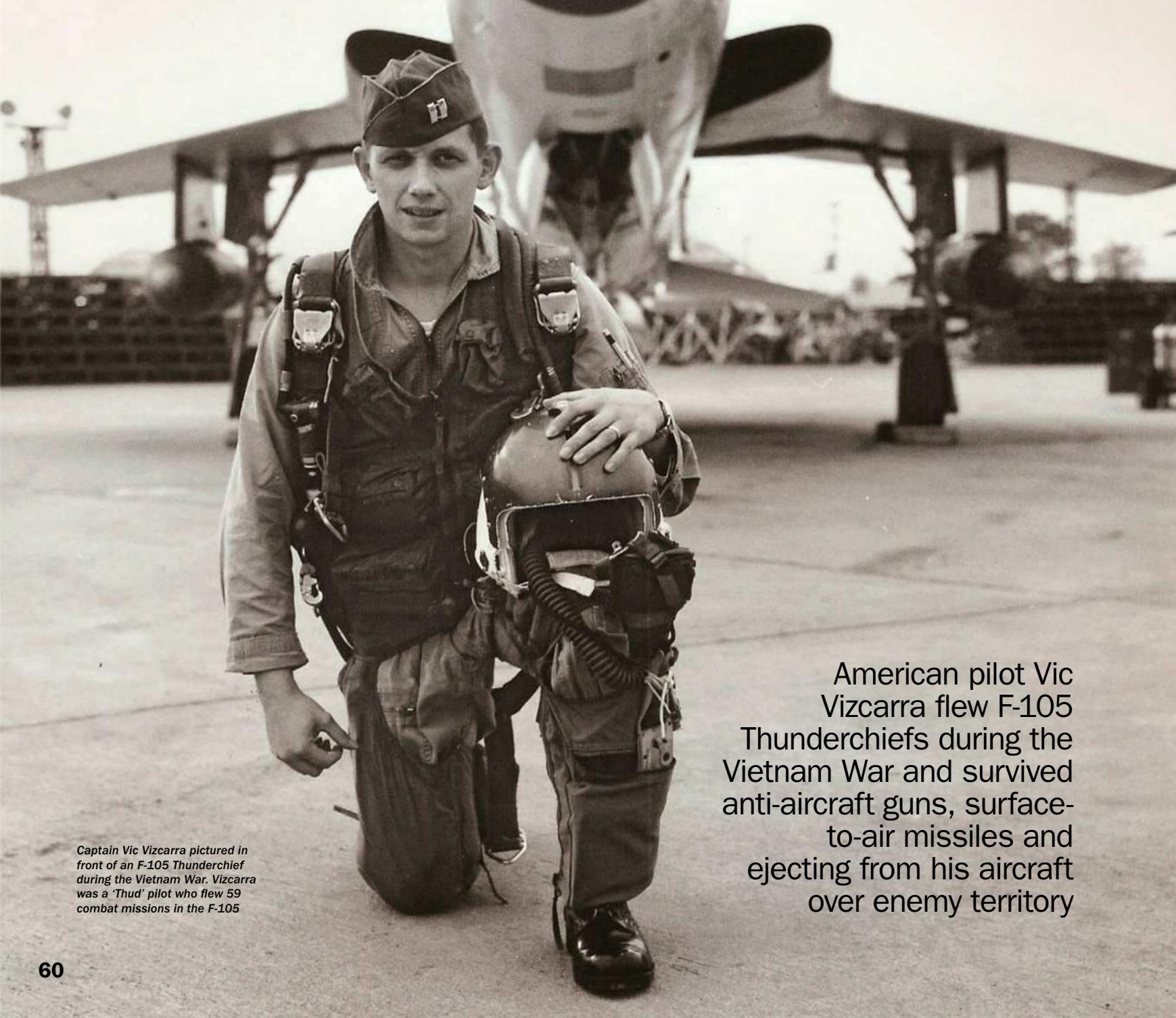
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BAILING OUT OVER 'NAM

AN INTERVIEW WITH COLONEL
VIC VIZCARRA (RETIRED, USAF)

WORDS TOM GARNER



Captain Vic Vizcarra pictured in front of an F-105 Thunderchief during the Vietnam War. Vizcarra was a 'Thud' pilot who flew 59 combat missions in the F-105

American pilot Vic Vizcarra flew F-105 Thunderchiefs during the Vietnam War and survived anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-air missiles and ejecting from his aircraft over enemy territory

The Vietnam War became synonymous with the distinctive sound of 'Huey' helicopters, but the use of jet fighters was a huge part of the American military strategy against North Vietnamese forces. The air war was decisively fought in America's favour, with a heavy emphasis on bombing missions over North Vietnam.

Nevertheless, American pilots were not immune from risk because the North Vietnamese were supplied by the USSR with MiG fighters. More importantly, US aircraft came under the most destructive attack from anti-aircraft guns and new surface-to-air missiles. Consequently, over 1,400 American warplanes were shot down over North Vietnam between 1965-68.

One of the pilots who fought against the dogged North Vietnamese air resistance was Captain Vic Vizcarra of the United States Air Force. Vizcarra flew hundreds of missions during the war, 59 of which were combat missions in F-105 Thunderchiefs with 80th and 354th fighter squadrons. Vizcarra experienced many dramatic incidents while flying in the F-105 but managed to survive a uniquely modern conflict where technology became the face of a hidden but determined enemy.

Deployment to Southeast Asia

Vizcarra had always wanted to fly and was greatly influenced by his older brother. "I got bitten by the flying bug at the age of six and knew that I not only wanted to fly but to fly fighters. I was greatly influenced by my older brother, who was 15 years older than me and flew in World War II. My dad would tell me stories about him fighting the bad guys and I said, 'How do you fight the bad guys?' He said, 'You fly an airplane.' That got me into aviation and I knew that's what I wanted to do."

Having joined an officer training corps program, Vizcarra was commissioned as a second lieutenant in January 1960 and began flying fighter jets. He built up his flying hours and even found himself caught up during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 while stationed at Okinawa, Japan. By the time Vizcarra was deployed to the Vietnam War to fly F-105 Thunderchiefs in October 1964, he had accrued hundreds of hours of flying experience and

spent a large amount of his first deployment escorting reconnaissance aircraft over Laos.

Based in Korat, Thailand, from October-December 1964, Vizcarra recalled the enthusiasm he shared with his fellow pilots for the opportunity of active service: "I was biting at the bit to get in there because, until you've been shot at, you really don't know what it's like. We were all keen to go, and during the first few days of combat we thought that it was exciting and the adrenaline was pumping. It wasn't until people started getting hit that all of a sudden you thought, 'Wait a minute, this is serious.'"

While conducting an airstrike over Laos on Christmas Day 1964, Vizcarra remembered feeling a "tinge of remorse. It really hit me, because we were celebrating the birth of peace, Jesus Christ, but dropping bombs."

Although Vizcarra had been flying active missions since October 1964 he didn't receive his first taste of combat until 19 July 1965.

By then based at Takhli, Thailand, Vizcarra's mission was a bombing flight against North Vietnamese army barracks at Vinh. Flying at a speed of 550 knots [1,019 kilometres per hour], he remembered, "I messed up. I was suddenly in a plane with eight 750-pound bombs and when you release them, they don't all release at the same time. If they did there was too much chance of the bombs colliding with each other. When you release the bombs simultaneously there is a 120-microsecond separation between each bomb. When I hit the release button I didn't hold it until all the bombs had gone. I pushed the button real quick, and once we left the target I still had two bombs left on the bomb rack."

Adrenaline played a large part in Vizcarra's first combat mission: "Because of the butterflies and the excitement of being in combat for the first time I really didn't know the target and was a little slow. I messed up again coming out of a dive recovery and was grinning from flying so fast."

Operation Spring High

One of the military firsts of the Vietnam War was the aggressive use of surface-to-air missiles. Known by the Americans as 'SAMs', North Vietnamese forces had first used these weapons in April 1965 and a rigorous debate ensued within the US government on how to deal with them.

The threat became real on 24 July 1965 when a SAM shot down an American F-4 aircraft, and the danger to US pilots increased. Vizcarra explained, "We couldn't attack SAM sites up to that point. The head of the CIA had recommended to President Johnson many times that the SAM sites should be taken out before they became a really serious threat. Unfortunately, Robert McNamara, the secretary of defense, was opposed to the idea because he was concerned that it would be seen as an escalation of the war. He would always overrule military advice, and Johnson would always side with McNamara. As we were flying our missions we could see these SAM sites being constructed but we couldn't attack them. It was not until the F-4 was shot down that Johnson finally approved to take them off the 'Do Not Attack' list."

Because of McNamara's reluctance to destroy SAM sites, Vizcarra and his fellow



"MY DAD WOULD TELL ME STORIES ABOUT HIM FIGHTING THE BAD GUYS AND I SAID, 'HOW DO YOU FIGHT THE BAD GUYS?' HE SAID, 'YOU FLY AN AIRPLANE.' THAT GOT ME INTO AVIATION AND I KNEW THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO DO"



F-105s taxiing to the arming area before taking off on a combat mission

pilots despised him for putting their lives in danger. "Many military people did not hold McNamara in high regard. I would later tell my children when they were growing up, 'Hate is a very harsh word and you need to reserve it for people that you really do hate.' However, I have to admit that I hated McNamara."

On 27 July 1965, 48 'Thuds', including Vizcarra's, were finally ordered to attack two SAM sites in North Vietnam on a mission called 'Operation Spring High', which was the first counter-airstrike against SAM sites in the history of aerial warfare. Vizcarra approached this mission with trepidation. "I was really feeling fear. There were supposed to be 48 aircraft simultaneously hitting two SAM sites that were three miles [five kilometres] apart, and this was the first time we had gone against them. I was in the final flight of six flights from Takhli. Two aircraft from the first and third flights got shot down and I could hear it, we were all on the same frequency, so I found the target under quite stressful conditions."

Armed with napalm, Vizcarra's target was a barracks housing personnel that manned a SAM site near Hanoi. Descending to 31 metres (100 feet), Vizcarra flew down the Red River valley and was exposed to anti-aircraft fire. "It was really wide, flat terrain and you couldn't use it to hide. We were out in the open and flak burst right over our heads, which forced us to descend even

"THE MISSION WAS SO STRESSFUL THAT VIZCARRA WAS GIVEN A SHOT OF WHISKEY TO CALM HIS NERVES UPON HIS RETURN: "IT WAS THE ONLY MISSION WHERE I WAS SERVED 'COMBAT WHISKEY'"

lower. The closer we got to the target the lower it would get and my flight lead got so low that he probably got within 20 feet [six metres] of the ground. As we approached the target we had to climb to 50 feet [15 metres] to release our weapons at the target."

Vizcarra and his flight were now flying at extremely high speeds at a very low altitude. "It took us between 5-6 minutes to travel 50 miles [80 kilometres]. I remember turning at the Red River valley and we were about 50 miles from the target and going at 500 knots [926 kilometres per hour], which was close to eight miles a minute."

Once he reached the SAM site, Vizcarra's flight deployed their weapons. "Half the strike

force was armed with 'CBU', which were intact pieces of bomb nuts. These would be torn into thousands of pieces and used to destroy soft targets such as armoured trucks or personnel. Two flights would give the SAM sites CBU and one flight went with napalm. I was carrying napalm so we dropped it and destroyed the barracks," Vizcarra explained.

The mission was so stressful that Vizcarra was given a shot of whiskey to calm his nerves upon his return: "It was the only mission where I was served 'Combat Whiskey'. At the end of a flight, the flight surgeon would open up his whiskey cabinet and pour each guy a shot. I'm not a whiskey drinker, but I was so tense from that mission that the gentleman came up my ladder before I'd even unstrapped and handed me a shot. I didn't ask what it was, I just took it and it burned my throat!"

Anti-aircraft fire

Days after destroying the SAM site, Vizcarra came under fire from 37mm triple-A anti-aircraft guns while flying at 1,370 metres (4,500 feet) around the Laotian-North Vietnamese border on 3 August 1965. Vizcarra's target was a bridge, and he recalled seeing anti-aircraft fire flying up towards him: "The 37mm looks like a large, glowing orange golf ball, and you could see them streaking up beneath you. When they sprung them there was a white puff, and I was



A flight line of F-105s at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base in late 1965



A 37mm triple-A gun emplacement manned by North Vietnamese troops. Vizcarra recalled that these guns would fire rounds that looked like "large, glowing orange golf balls"



An intelligence target photo, provided to each mission pilot for the first airstrike against a SAM site in military aviation history, July 1965

F-105s conduct a bombing run above low cloud formations, North Vietnam, 14 June 1966

"EVERYBODY LOVED THE FACT THAT IT WAS FAST AND COULD OUTRUN MIG-17S WHILE FULLY LOADED"



Left: An F-105 in flight with a full bomb load of 750lb bombs. This aircraft was later shot down over Laos on 24 December 1968

FLYING A 'THUD'

THE REPUBLIC F-105 THUNDERCHIEF FLEW THE MOST AMERICAN BOMBING MISSIONS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND WAS A FORMIDABLE AIRCRAFT

With a top speed of 2,237 kilometres per hour (1,390 miles per hour) and a maximum bomb load of over 5,442 kilograms (12,000 pounds), the F-105 conducted 75 per cent of bombing missions over North Vietnam. Developed in the mid-1950s, this supersonic fighter-bomber was designed for low-level, high-speed attacks. It initially had a poor reputation and pilots nicknamed F-105s 'Thuds', which eventually became a term of endearment. With design modifications and improvements,

the Thud achieved great performance capabilities that enabled it to carry the heaviest conventional weapons further than any other fighter-bomber. It was faster than most opposing aircraft and was able to sustain heavy damage.

The F-105's weapons system was formidable. Vizcarra recalled, "It could carry a variety of weapons, most commonly eight 750-pound bombs. As the war got more serious with SAMs we had defensive weapons, such as electronic

countermeasure pods. We could also carry two 3,000-pound bombs, which was a huge weapon."

Vizcarra remembered the Thud with affection: "I definitely loved flying the F-105. It had an extremely comfortable cockpit and was very stable. Everybody loved the fact that it was fast and could outrun MiG-17s while fully loaded. The Soviets initially armed the North Vietnamese with MiG-17s but they couldn't catch the F-105s. That's why they started giving them the MiG-21, their best fighter."

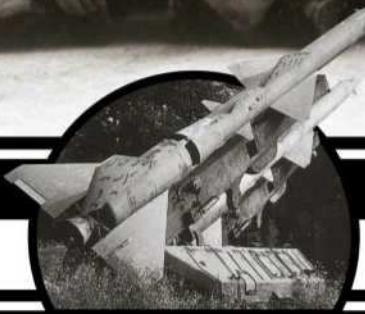


Three F-105s take off to go on a bombing mission over North Vietnam in 1966. In the early part of the war the F-105 was not camouflaged and had a silver coat



Left: F-105s refuelling over heavy cloud cover before heading to North Vietnam. Vizcarra's aircraft, 357, is pictured after taking on fuel

The 354th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Vic Vizcarra is kneeling on the second row, far right



An SA-2 surface-to-air missile. Vizcarra and his colleagues would joke that these fearsome weapons looked like "flying telephone poles"

DEFATING A SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE

VIC VIZCARRA HAD TO FREQUENTLY COMBAT THE SA-2 MISSILE – A DANGEROUS WEAPON THAT REVOLUTIONISED AERIAL WARFARE

Developed by the USSR, the SA-2 was widely used during the Vietnam War. The heat-seeking missile used a two-stage rocket booster system and was fitted with a 197-kilogram (434-pound) warhead. Its range was up to 48 kilometres (30 miles) with a maximum height of 18,288 metres (60,000 feet).

The SA-2 was an innovative threat to American pilots in Vietnam, but Vizcarra explained that they could be successfully outmanoeuvred: "We referred to them as 'flying telephone poles'. They were easy to spot and luckily they were large enough that you could see them coming at you. You had to take defensive manoeuvres, and with hard manoeuvring you could out-run it, but that's not how you would defeat it."

Defeating a SAM required skilful flying. "When you saw a SAM coming at you, you had to see the launch so you could spot it early because they spewed a lot of burst and smoke. The burst would

put out a large flame, so as soon as you spotted one you really had to put it off. You'd manoeuvre to a three or nine o'clock position so that it came at you from the side. The SAM always launched from a high altitude, so it would start off high and turn down towards you. As soon as you saw it you had

to put your nose down to force it to do a bigger turn towards you. Once you got it coming down towards you, you would pull back up. It would try and follow you but it couldn't do it because it had very small wings. So as it tried to pull back up it would just tend to stall out and tumble. That's the way you would defeat a SAM."

Vizcarra recalled that surviving these missiles was different from standard anti-aircraft fire: "It made it very personal. Because the North Vietnamese would shoot at you with triple-A fire, they would just put up a large barrage and hope that you'd run into it. A SAM is looking right at you, it's got your lead and it's going after you, so it's much more personal. To be honest though, the SAMs were not very effective at all. You could defeat them, and for the whole Vietnam War their effectiveness rate was actually less than 1.2 per cent."

"ONCE YOU GOT IT COMING DOWN TOWARDS YOU, YOU WOULD PULL BACK UP. IT WOULD TRY AND FOLLOW YOU BUT IT COULDN'T DO IT BECAUSE IT HAD VERY SMALL WINGS"

"THEY APPEARED TO BE VERY CAPABLE LEARNERS. THE RUSSIANS TRAINED THEM, AND BECAUSE THEY WERE OPERATING THE SAMS THEY KNEW HOW TO USE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT"



rolling in on a wooden bridge. I could see the orange golf balls flying all over me, and when I released my weapons I started pulling to recover from my dive and rolled to the left."

During this engagement, while under fire, Vizcarra thought his aircraft had been hit: "Once I rolled up and was climbing out I looked over to my left and three feet [0.9 metres] of my leading-edge wing flap was missing. You could see that it had torn off so I thought I'd been hit. But after looking at the damage back at base it became obvious that the pressure equalisation valve in the drop tank had failed during the dive on the bridge and it had imploded."

Mechanical problems would later cause Vizcarra even more worrying problems, but it was the constant flying that was beginning to induce stress. During what was his second deployment over Vietnam, Vizcarra regularly began attending Mass: "When you get shot at, you get very religious all of a sudden. There was a very small circle of guys that thought they were invincible and were always biting at the bit to lead the dangerous missions. Then the junior pilots, where I placed myself, strapped up everyday, day after day. You felt that, 'This could be the guy going to be hit, not me.' If you ever thought you were going to be hit all the heart went. There was also a very small circle of those who thought they weren't going to make it and actually asked to be relieved of duty. I needed religious faith to give me the courage to go day after day."

Conversely, Vizcarra admitted that flying combat missions was "really addictive because of the adrenaline. It was like the challenge and excitement of scoring in rugby. As long as you weren't getting knocked out and getting hit it was exciting, particularly when you're on a roll and flying some pretty interesting missions. You had a lot of anxieties going to the target, but there was a great feeling of satisfaction coming home and accomplishment that you shot the target."

For Vizcarra, this addiction to combat missions was put into sharp perspective when he went on his third deployment between September–November 1967. "The more you did it, the more you wanted to do it – until I had the experience of bailing out."

Ejecting over enemy skies

By 1966, casualties were rising among Thud pilots and Vizcarra was losing colleagues in combat. "It got to be a

Left: Major Art Mearns (1929-66) was Vizcarra's flight commander and leader who was listed as missing on 11 November 1966 and later declared killed in action. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for "gallantry and devotion to duty". Mearns's citation read that he had "reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force"

little bit troublesome, and the reality hits you that you may not come back."

He was also coming to respect the North Vietnamese forces: "They appeared to be very capable learners. The Russians trained them, and because they were operating the Sams they knew how to use sophisticated equipment. They did things that Americans did not think was possible so they deserve recognition for being capable people."

Vizcarra was now taking part in 'Iron Hand' missions, with the objective to suppress enemy defensive systems, particularly SAMs. Thud pilots would deliberately challenge SAMs before airstrikes destroyed their sites. Dedicated crews in two-seater F-105Gs would act as 'bait' while wingmen such as Vizcarra would bomb the targets. By November 1966, "the North Vietnamese were establishing more and more SAM sites and putting them up from Hanoi down towards the south, and they kept moving them down there."

On 6 November 1966 Vizcarra went on an Iron Hand mission acting as wingman to an F-105 over a southern area of North Vietnamese SAM activity. Vizcarra and his lead aircraft were looking for three suspected SAM sites, but their flight turned into a fruitless search. On a return journey to the first site Vizcarra began having problems with his aircraft. "So far we had not been shot at by the North Vietnamese, so we started this journey back to the coast again to look at the first suspected site, but I got an engine compressor stall. If you got a compressor stall in the F-105 you knew there was something wrong with the engine."

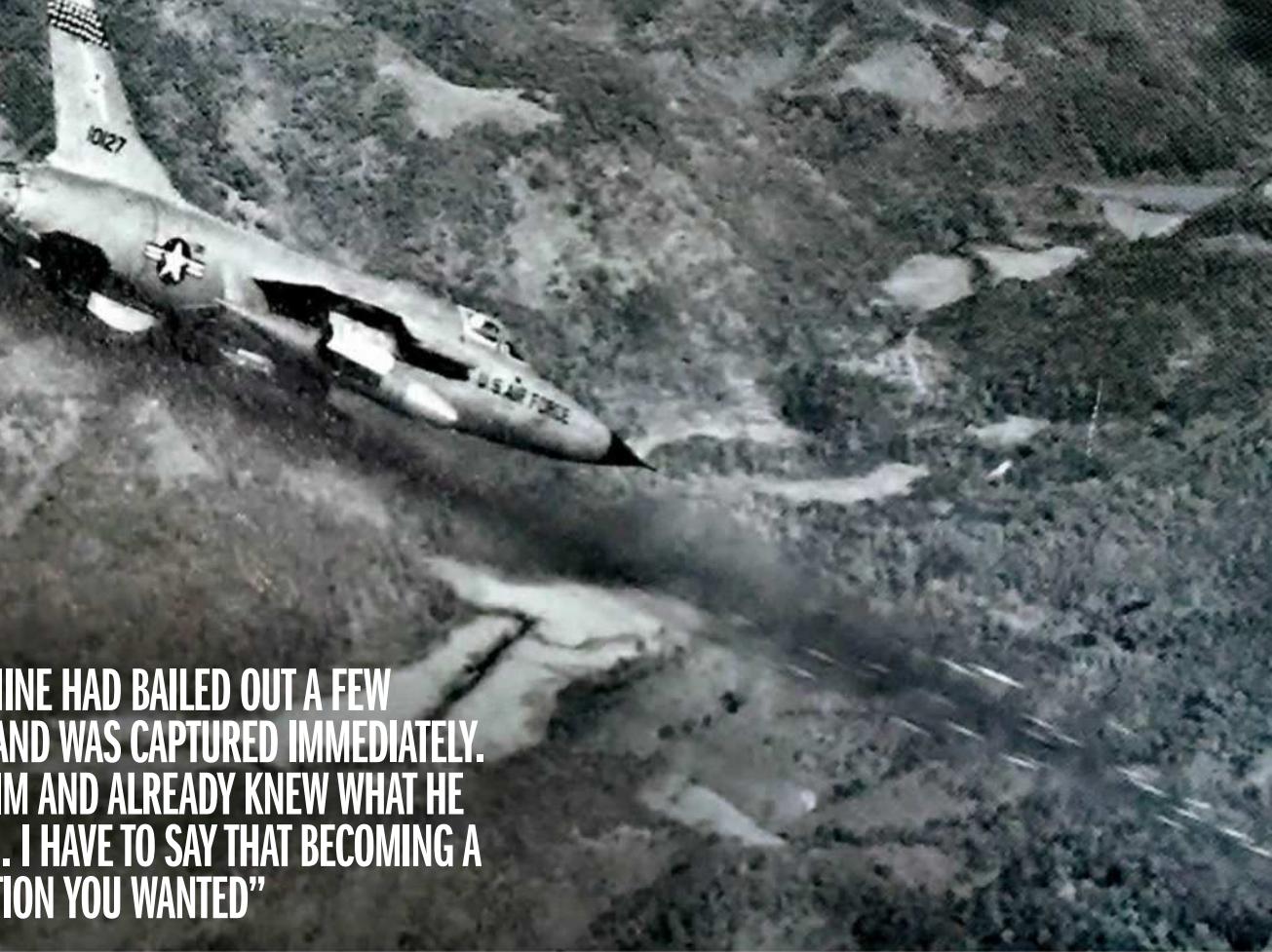
Vizcarra initially believed he could nurse his aircraft back to base, but "after a short time it became obvious that I had an engine failure. It was still running but I could not maintain altitude or air speed, and I didn't realise how quickly it deteriorated. It wasn't until the flight lead said, 'Dip your flaps', which you needed when you're very slow, that I realised the plane wasn't flying anymore and I had to get out."

With the F-105's sudden engine failure, Vizcarra now had no choice but to eject over enemy territory: "I told them I was going to have to eject and I did. The ejection was surprisingly smooth and mild because I took it at such a slow air speed. I didn't panic and everything worked properly. The seat blew up and did a kind of summersault before the seatbelt was automatically disconnected."

Vizcarra was now parachuting over "extremely dense jungle" and prepared for a tree landing. "I was shocked at the sudden stop, and it knocked the breath out of me because I hit the trees very suddenly. I ended up hanging upside down with my right ankle wedged between a tree branch that was split like a 'Y'."

Now in a precarious position, Vizcarra did not know how high up he was from the ground. "Trying to get out of this tree took a lot of effort, and I was doing pull ups upside down to grab hold of this branch. I managed to pull myself up but then did something really foolish. North Vietnamese trees are very tall, and guys who had bailed out had hurt themselves not realising how high up they were and they would break bones from the fall. I did have a 200-foot [61-metre] lanyard in my parachute that you could use as a pulley to let you down, but with

An F-105 fires 2.75-inch rockets over enemy territory. Vizcarra would have performed similar manoeuvres during a mission in August 1965



"A DEAR FRIEND OF MINE HAD BAILED OUT A FEW MONTHS BEFORE ME AND WAS CAPTURED IMMEDIATELY. I SAW PICTURES OF HIM AND ALREADY KNEW WHAT HE WAS GOING THROUGH. I HAVE TO SAY THAT BECOMING A POW WAS NOT AN OPTION YOU WANTED"

the adrenaline pumping and the excitement of ejection I couldn't remember how to rig it up."

Vizcarra took a dangerous step to get down from the tree: "I dropped my helmet to determine how high I was and then let myself go. I was shocked when I landed within six feet [1.8 metres] of the ground! I must have dropped dozens of feet before I was hanging upside down and my head had been only feet above the ground. I couldn't tell from my position because the leaves were so thick, so that was really chancy what I did there."

A hostile environment

Once on the ground, Vizcarra had to be rescued as soon as possible, but that was easier said than done. He had landed in isolated jungle 33 kilometres (20.5 miles) southeast from the Mu Gia Pass on the Laotian-North Vietnamese border, which was used as a military route to infiltrate supplies to the Viet Cong. Vizcarra knew he could not be captured: "A dear friend of mine had bailed out a few months before me and was captured immediately. I saw pictures of him and already knew what he was going through. I have to say that becoming a POW was not an option you wanted."

Vizcarra immediately attempted to contact his flight lead on a survival radio: "In my excitement I pushed the lever and asked to talk, but it was poorly designed. I pushed the button right through 'Talk' into a beeper signal without realising it. So there I was standing there talking, when really I was sending out a beeper signal. My flight leader and I couldn't communicate because I was not using the proper mode."

Fortunately for Vizcarra, his flight leader found a way around the communication problem. "Luckily he was very smart. He started playing '20 Questions' where he would

Below: This UH-2A helicopter 'Royal Lancer' rescued Vizcarra from the jungle and probable capture



ask me a question and get me to answer by using the beeper. One beep was 'Yes' and two beeps were 'No'. We communicated like that for a while and he eventually said, 'We've got rescue on the way. Turn your radio off, save the battery and come back up in 15 minutes'.

Vizcarra was now alone and had to prepare for hiding and surviving in the jungle in case the rescue attempt failed.

Surviving in a cave

While he waited to be rescued, Vizcarra had to find immediate cover. "I sat there waiting for the time to go by and realised that, even though I was in really thick jungle I still was coming out in the open and needed to find a hiding place."

Vizcarra soon came across a large hill of karst to the north of his landing position and discovered many caves. "Karst is a type of lava formation, which is indigenous to that area. I was shocked how porous it was and had a selection of many caves to go into. I picked the one that was right in front of me and found that it was a good hiding place and hid in there."

There was no accurate way of knowing how long it would be before the rescue came, so Vizcarra had to rely on his survival kit. "One pilot spent 30 days in the jungle before he got rescued, so you had a poncho to keep yourself covered from the rain as well as a knife, plate, compass, mirror and fishing gear."

One particular item had a novel use: "There was a condom in the survival gear. I joked with a friend years later that it was there in case you had to sleep your way out of Vietnam, but it really wasn't. Your condom was to be used as an additional way to collect water even though you had cans of water in your gear."

While he was in the cave, Vizcarra reflected on his situation: "Up to this point I was reacting to my training, but I was now sitting waiting to be rescued with nothing to do. I suddenly started to think about my family and the terrible situation I was in. I resorted back to my faith again and said a little prayer, and sure enough as soon as I finished saying it I heard aircraft coming back. I felt like some of my prayers had been heard."

Rescue

Vizcarra was being rescued by a US Navy helicopter, but the device the naval crew used to rescue him almost caused another accident: "The jungle rescue device is called a 'Tree Pole Trainer' and looks like an anchor as it's lowered through the trees. It had a safety harness but I didn't have enough strength in my thumb to open the clip all the way. It only partially opened or popped out. I heard the radio saying, 'Hurry up, we're low on fuel, let us know when we can pull you up.' That made me even more nervous so I wrapped this cable around me."

Vizcarra was then pulled out of the jungle slightly prematurely. "I was going to say, 'OK, go ahead' but as soon as they heard 'OK' they



Below: Vizcarra in the wardroom of USS Halsey with his rescuers and the captain of the ship. There is a gunpowder mark on Vizcarra's stomach from the seatbelt explosive charge during his ejection



started to pull me back up. I dropped the radio, which at least freed my hands so I could hang on for dear life, because I wasn't strapped in properly. The cable then draped over a branch and they used me as a battering ram to break it. On the fifth attempt they succeeded and I was finally free. When the helicopter landed on the ship it only had two minutes of fuel remaining."

The feeling of being rescued was a great relief: "Once I was on the helicopter I felt very good. I was on the ground for a little bit over two hours, and although it was only short it seemed like a long time." Vizcarra was flown to USS Halsey and "treated like royalty" before he was transferred to the USS Constellation and finally reunited with his squadron. For minor injuries he had received during the rescue Vizcarra was awarded the Purple Heart, although he recalled, "I did suffer bruises and scrapes on my arm, which drew blood, but I really didn't think I deserved it. It was a miracle I got rescued because I made lots of mistakes."

The cost of war

Vizcarra's ejection and rescue occurred towards the end of his time flying the F-105 and he recalled not being as enthusiastic to fly afterwards: "You're not so anxious to get back in a plane the minute you have to bail out over enemy territory." Although there was an unwritten policy that rescued pilots were sent home, Vizcarra's experience was valued, and he had to remain on active duty. After another near-accident Vizcarra was feeling edgy: "I was shook up and told [my superior officer], "Sir, this is my third miss in a row and I think the good Lord is trying to tell me something."

397 F-105s were shot down during the Vietnam War between 1965-72, and in Vizcarra's wing dozens of pilots had been shot down by mid-1967. Many were rescued, but

"THE CABLE THEN DRAPED OVER A BRANCH AND THEY USED ME AS A BATTERING RAM TO BREAK IT. ON THE FIFTH ATTEMPT THEY SUCCEEDED AND I WAS FINALLY FREE"

a significant number were killed or captured. Vizcarra was eventually sent to Bangkok, but while he was there his flight commander Major Art Mearns was killed in action. "He was a good guy. I liked him and flew most of my missions with him, so that hit me hard. I felt guilty that I was in Bangkok instead of flying with him, and that's what keeps coming back. I don't think I could have saved him, but I did feel terrible that I was not with him on that mission." Vizcarra flew his last Thud mission shortly afterwards on 19 November 1966.

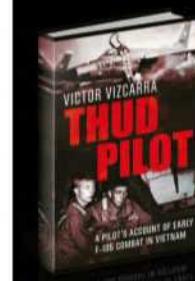
As for enemy casualties, Vizcarra explained that he had different views from some of his fellow pilots: "I didn't care for a few of the pilots' attitudes. Their attitude was that anybody in North Vietnam was an enemy, but I didn't see it that way. I had no qualms about killing the military because that's the enemy and that sort of thinking made it easy for me to bomb targets over North Vietnam. But civilians are civilians, and I didn't want to kill them."

The Vietnam War, then and now, has always been a deeply controversial conflict, and Vizcarra, who later retired as a colonel, felt that American politicians should bear the responsibility for the US defeat. "Unfortunately there was too much politics involved in the war.

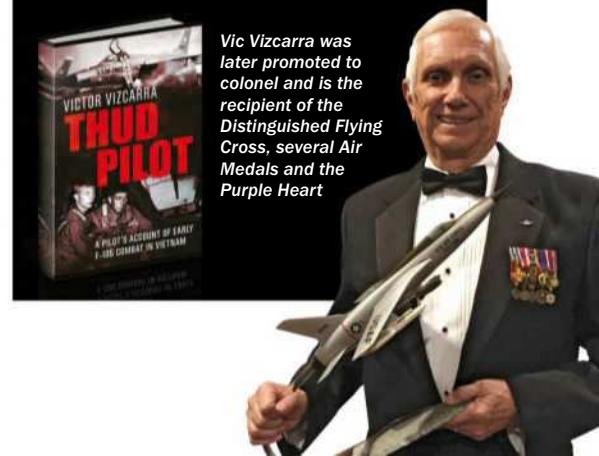
My philosophy is that if a nation needs to go to war the politicians should tell the military what the objective is but then let them use military strategy to achieve the objective. But unfortunately the United States has got too involved in too many wars since World War II where the politicians run the war rather than the military."

Since the war ended, Vizcarra has thought about the consequences of the conflict and concluded that those who died should be honoured. "I went through a period where it kind of oppressed me because people had been lost unnecessarily. I started questioning in my mind, 'Was it all worth it?' I almost came to the conclusion that it wasn't, but what changed my mind was when I thought it would be a disservice to those that made the ultimate sacrifice. If it wasn't worth it, how can you say this to people who went there and did what their country asked them to do, even in adverse circumstances? Time changes your feelings somewhat, but as a combat pilot I mostly remember the good."

Vic Vizcarra is the author of *Thud Pilot: A Pilot's Account Of Early F-105 Combat In Vietnam*, published by Fonthill Media. Turn to page 93 for a review.



Vic Vizcarra was later promoted to colonel and is the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, several Air Medals and the Purple Heart



STURMPANZERWAGEN

A7V

Germany's first operational tank, the Sturmpanzerwagen A7V made its combat debut during the desperate Spring Offensive in 1918

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

The appearance of British tanks on the World War I battlefield of the Somme in 1916 came as a shock to the German military establishment. Although tank development had been of interest prior to the outbreak of war – as early as 1911 in fact – other priorities had shunted the development of armoured fighting vehicles to low importance prior to the rude awakening.

The only operational German tank of World War I was the product of a hurried development program that began with the formation within the War Ministry of the Allgemeines Kriegsdepartement Abteilung 7 Verkehrswesen – which translates as General War Department Section 7, Transportation – in the autumn of 1916. The new department also contributed a part of its name to its first production vehicle, the Sturmpanzerwagen A7V, or Armoured Assault Vehicle A7V.

Specifications were issued for a monolithic, heavily armed and armoured beast that could sweep aside Allied tanks, both British and French, and destroy soft targets such as infantry concentrations and machine gun nests that impeded the progress of infantry. Specifications were also issued for a pair of light tanks built for speed and manoeuvrability to rapidly exploit offensive breakthroughs.

Three prototype tanks were built but never progressed beyond preliminary evaluation, either due to the coming of the Armistice in November 1918 or their obvious design flaws. The massive 120-ton Grosskampfwagen, or K-Wagen, was dropped with the end of the war; the light seven and eight-ton LK I and LK II tanks were conceived in early 1918. The German army ordered 580 LK IIs, but none were completed. A commitment was made to limited production of the A7V in November 1916, mere weeks after the unnerving encounter with British armour on the Somme.

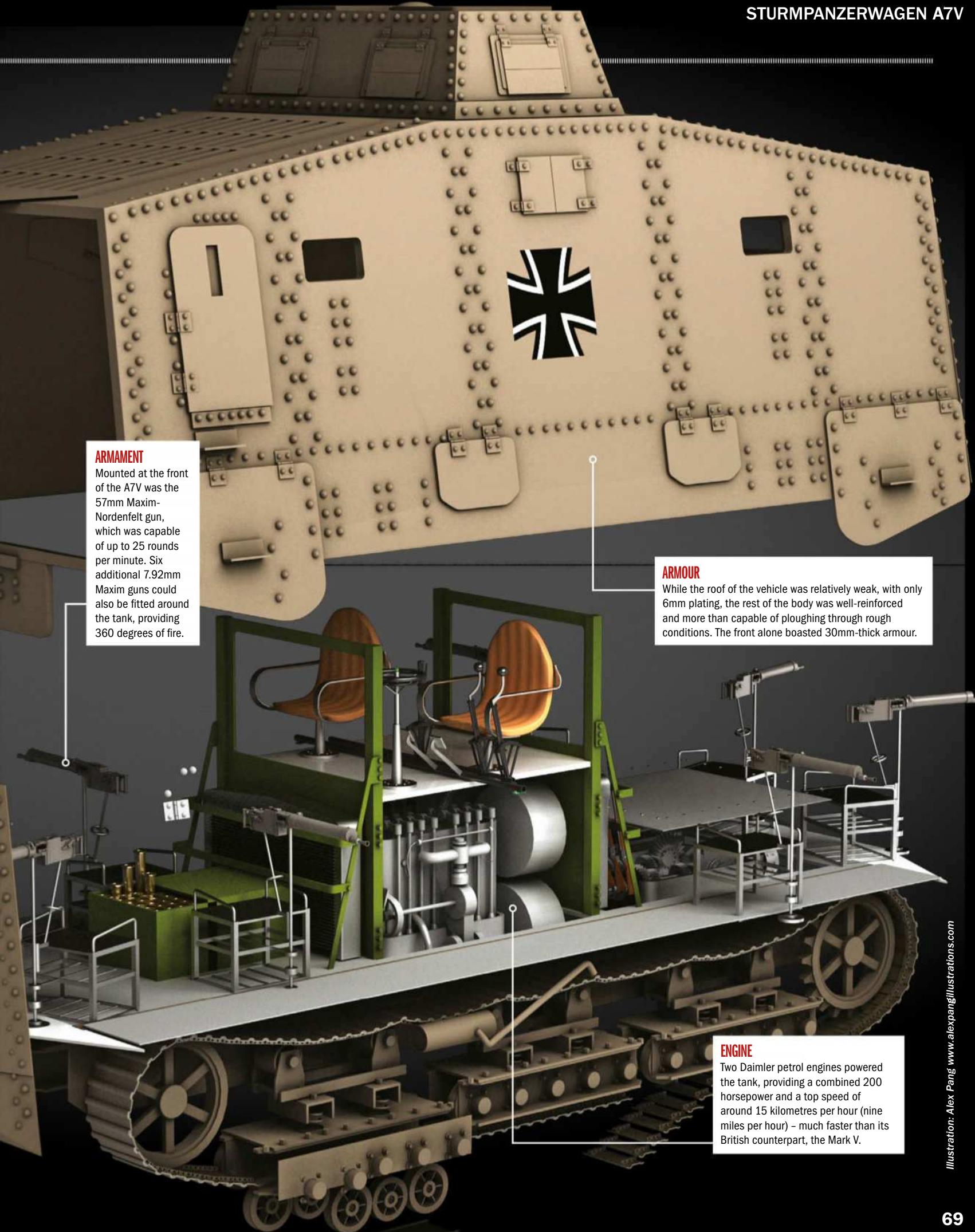
STURMPANZERWAGEN A7V

COMMISSIONED: 1918 **ORIGIN:** GERMANY
LENGTH: 7.34M (24FT) **RANGE:** 80KM (50MI)
ENGINE: 2 X DAIMLER-BENZ FOUR-CYLINDER,
100-HORSEPOWER PETROL ENGINES
PRIMARY WEAPON: 57MM MAXIM-NORDENFELT
CANNON SECONDARY WEAPON: 6 X 7.92MM
MAXIM MG08 MACHINE GUNS **CREW:** 18

"SPECIFICATIONS WERE ISSUED FOR A MONOLITHIC, HEAVILY ARMED AND ARMOURED BEAST THAT COULD SWEEP ASIDE ALLIED TANKS"

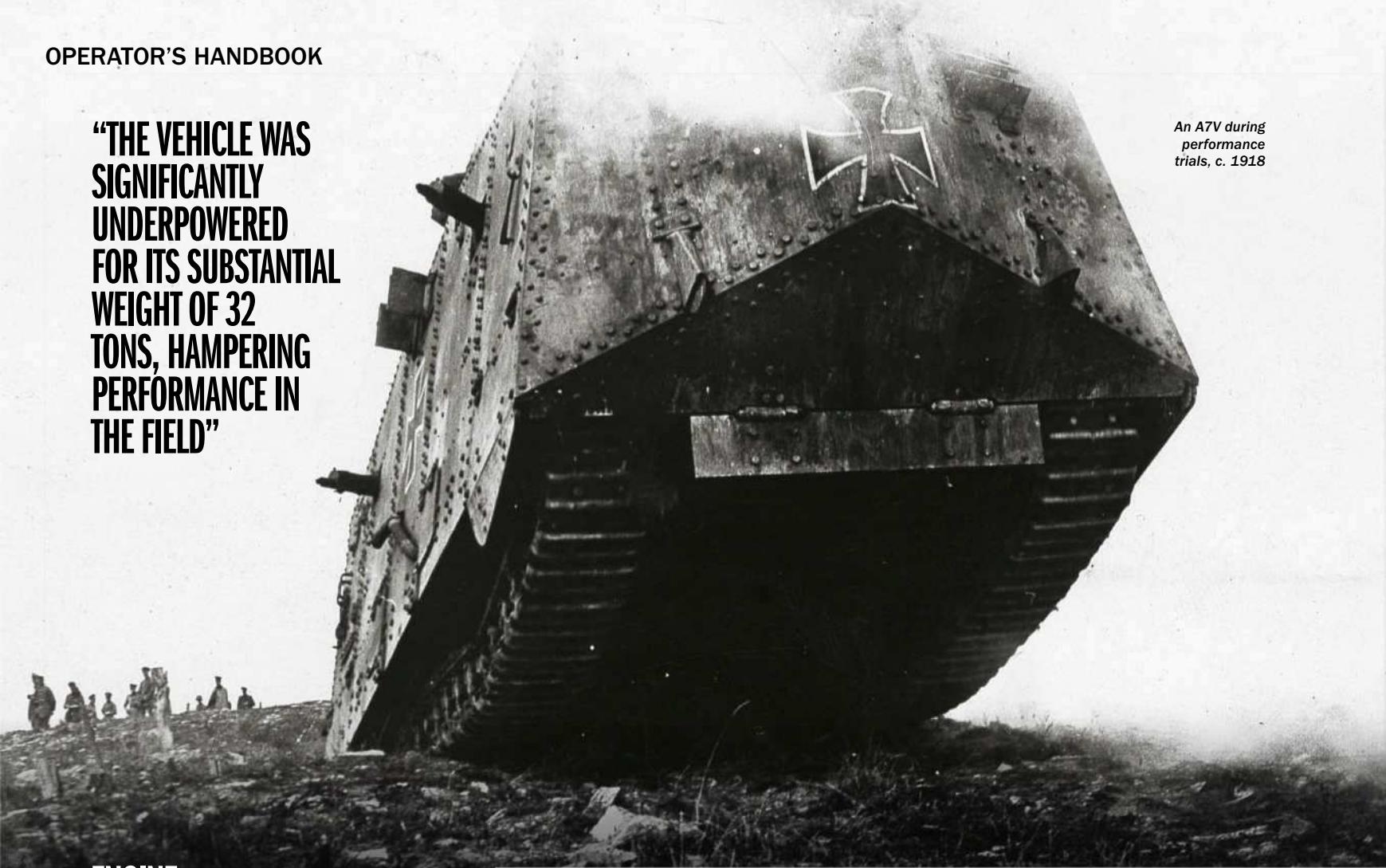
Left: An A7V named 'Wotan' in active service in 1918





"THE VEHICLE WAS SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERPOWERED FOR ITS SUBSTANTIAL WEIGHT OF 32 TONS, HAMPERING PERFORMANCE IN THE FIELD"

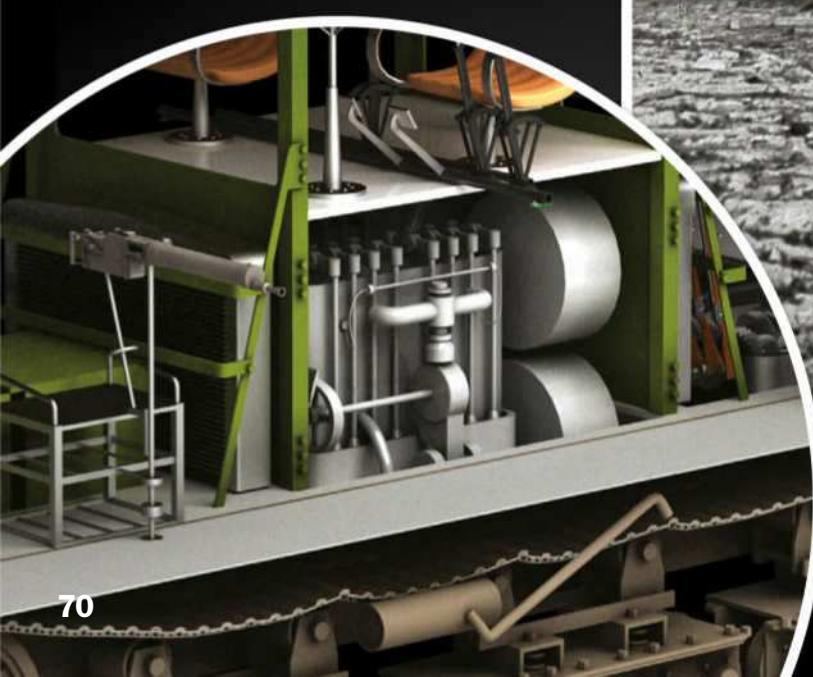
An A7V during performance trials, c. 1918



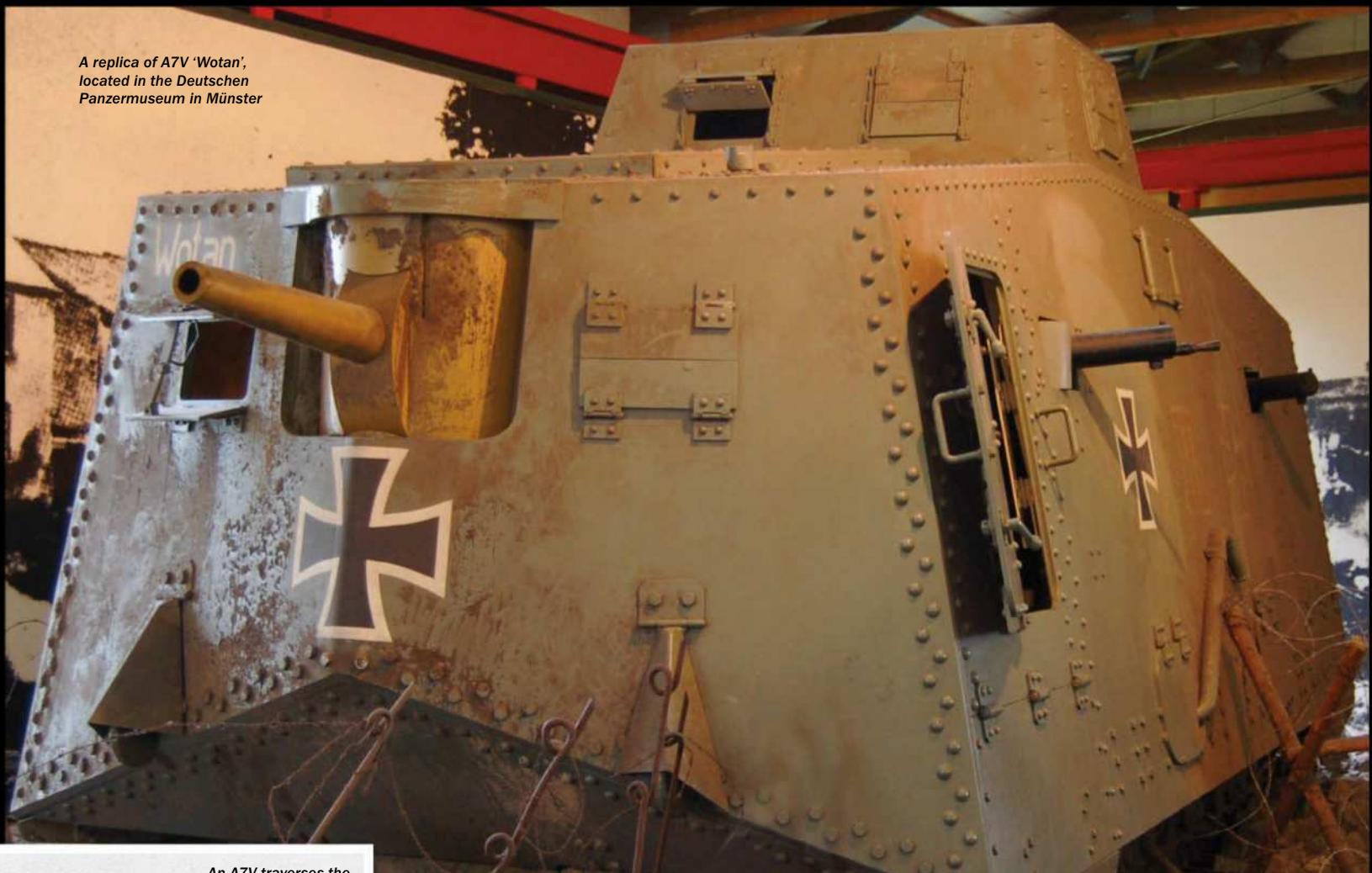
ENGINE

The twin 100-horsepower, four-cylinder Daimler engines mounted aboard the A7V provided a top speed of only 15 kilometres per hour (nine miles per hour) on suitable roadways, and just over six kilometres per hour (four miles per hour) traversing open cross-country terrain.

The vehicle was significantly underpowered for its substantial weight of 32 tons, hampering performance in the field. The engines were paired with Adler gearboxes and differentials, while thick exhaust was emitted through a system of pipes that ran along the lower sides of the hull. The noise level of the engines complicated communications inside the armoured vehicle, and 500 litres (110 gallons) of fuel was stored aboard the A7V.



A replica of A7V 'Wotan', located in the Deutschen Panzermuseum in Münster



An A7V traverses the ground along the Western Front, c. April-May 1918



"THESE HEAVY WEAPONS, ADAPTED FROM FIELD ARTILLERY PIECES WITH A RANGE UP TO 2,700 METRES (2,950 YARDS), WERE OF BRITISH, RUSSIAN, OR BELGIAN MANUFACTURE, EITHER PROCURED BEFORE THE WAR OR CAPTURED ON THE BATTLEFIELD"

ARMAMENT

The primary weapon of the Sturmpanzerwagen A7V was the 57mm Maxim-Nordenfelt cannon set forward in the centre of the hull, in either a pyramid and pedestal mount called a Sockellafette or a trestle mount called a Bocklafette. These heavy weapons, adapted from field artillery pieces with a range up to 2,700 metres (2,950 yards), were of British, Russian or Belgian manufacture, either procured before the war or captured on the battlefield. 500 rounds were stored inside the A7V. Secondary armament included six 7.92mm Maxim MG08 machine guns mounted along the sides and rear of the hull to engage with enemy infantry. Approximately 30,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition was carried.

Six 7.92mm Maxim MG08 machine guns provided a powerful anti-infantry armament



DESIGN

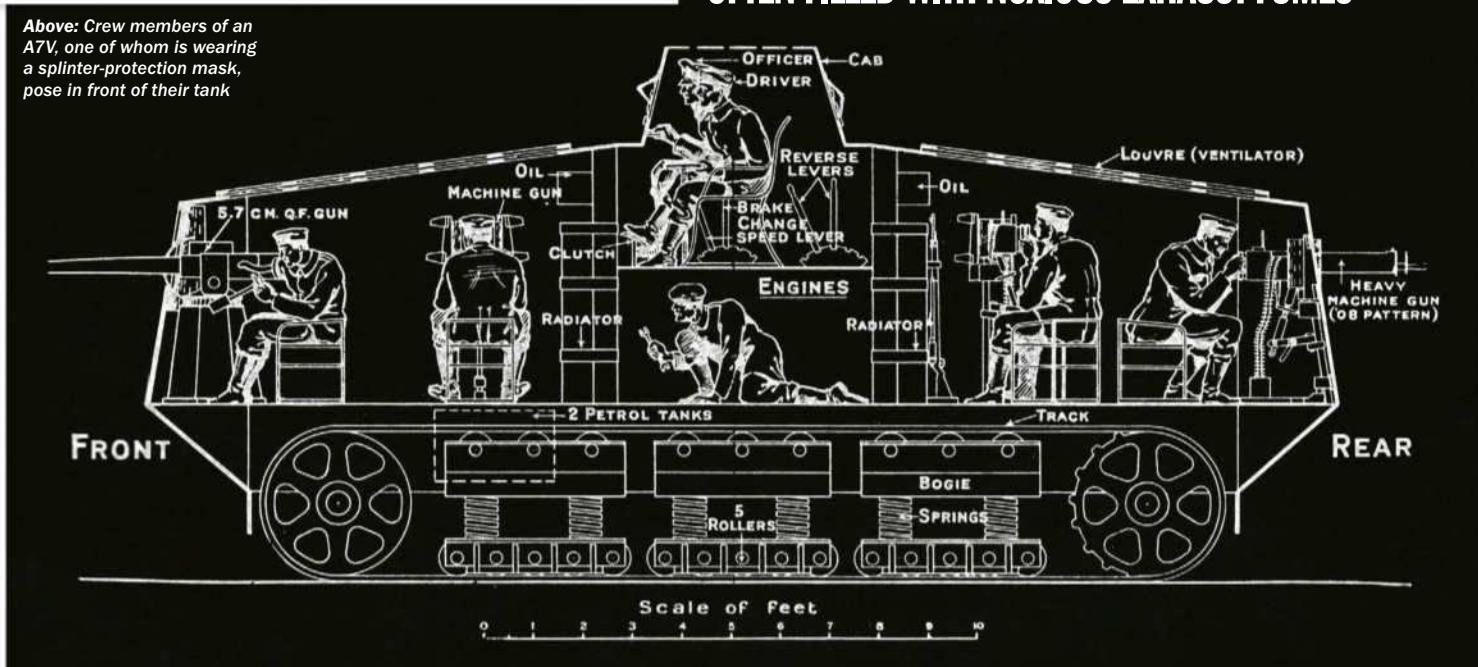
Joseph Vollmer, a German army captain and well-known automobile designer, led the team of engineers that developed the A7V. The tank was essentially an armoured box placed atop the chassis of a Holt tractor. Its spring suspension was taxed by the vehicle's 32-ton, 7.34-metre (24 feet) long and 3.3-metre (10.8 feet) high body. Armour plating was up to 30mm thick on the front and 15mm on each side. Hinged doors allowed crewmen to enter and exit the A7V, while the engine was placed in the centre of the crew compartment, restricting movement. Low ground clearance – no more than 40 centimetres – hampered battlefield mobility as well.



CREW COMPARTMENT

The interior of the Sturmpanzerwagen A7V was cramped and often filled with noxious exhaust fumes that sickened the crew of 17 soldiers and a single officer – particularly during training exercises or combat when weapons were fired, releasing additional smoke. Two crewmen, a gunner and a loader, were needed to service each weapon. The ponderous tank also required a pair of drivers, positioned in a bridge area or cupola in the upper centre, and operated the vehicle with a steering wheel and system of levers. A mechanic and signalman were also aboard, and soldiers utilised ropes suspended overhead to maintain balance as the tank advanced across rugged terrain.

"THE STURMPANZERWAGEN A7V WAS CRAMPED AND OFTEN FILLED WITH NOXIOUS EXHAUST FUMES"



SERVICE HISTORY

THE STURMPANZERWAGEN A7V WAS ILL-SUITED FOR COMBAT AMID THE WIDE TRENCH LINES OF THE WESTERN FRONT

An expedient response to the appearance of British tanks on the battlefield, the Sturmpanzerwagen A7V was rushed into service during Operation Michael, part of the German Spring Offensive in 1918 aimed at breaking the stalemate on the Western Front and ending World War I.

The first pre-production A7V was completed in September 1917, and only 20 tanks were manufactured before the end of the war. Its numbers were woefully inadequate to

"ITS NUMBERS WERE WOEFULLY INADEQUATE TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT, AND AS A RESULT ITS COMBAT DEPLOYMENT WAS LIMITED"

influence the outcome of the conflict, and as a result its combat deployment was limited. In contrast, the British manufactured 7,700 tanks during the war years.

The A7V entered combat for the first time on 21 March 1918, as five tanks under the command of Captain Walter Greiff operated in the vicinity of the St Quentin Canal in northern France. Three suffered mechanical breakdowns, while the other two engaged in a minor action to quell a British advance.

On 23 April 1918 three A7Vs engaged three British Mark IV tanks in the vicinity of Villers-Bretonneux, in history's first tank versus tank battle. Two of the British tanks, 'female' variants armed only with machine guns, were damaged and retired. The third, a 'male' mounting a six-pounder cannon, knocked out one A7V, and the other two withdrew. A total of 18 A7Vs entered combat that day. Two were damaged after falling into shell holes, three were captured by Allied troops, and several others experienced mechanical problems.

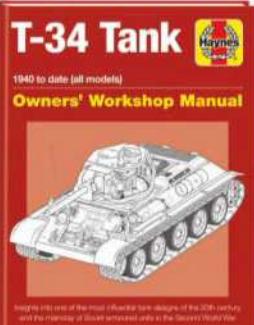
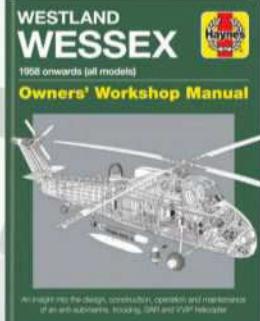
Two variants, an open topped supply vehicle, the Überlandwagen, and the A7V/U, similar in design to British types with all-around tracks and two 57mm guns, were built. 75 examples of the Überlandwagen were completed, but the A7V/U reached only the prototype stage. The only surviving A7V, No. 506, nicknamed 'Mephisto', is on display at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane, Australia. Mephisto was one of the three A7Vs captured at Villers-Bretonneux.



Images: Alamy, Getty, Alex Pang, TopFoto



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YORKTOWN

The world turned upside down when a British army found itself cornered by a combined French-American force

NORTH AMERICA 28 SEPTEMBER - 17 OCTOBER 1781

The storming of redoubts Nine and Ten saw the fiercest fighting of the entire siege, but both positions fell quickly

WORDS DAVID SMITH

OPPOSING FORCES



BRITAIN

LEADER:

Earl Cornwallis

INFANTRY:

8,000 (including Hessians & loyalists)

CAVALRY:

400

ARTILLERY:

85



USA

LEADER:

George Washington

INFANTRY:

8,000 (including militia)

CAVALRY:

100

ARTILLERY:

60



FRANCE

LEADER:

Comte de Rochambeau

INFANTRY:

12,000 (including sailors)

CAVALRY:

300

ARTILLERY:

90



Yorktown, the decisive victory of the American War of Independence, has been viewed as a stunning upset. The defeat of the mighty British Army at the hands of the inexperienced Americans is either a miraculous triumph or an abject humiliation, depending on your viewpoint. Yet this was a battle that emphasised the monumental task facing Britain in attempting to subdue a rebellion in colonies nearly 5,000 kilometres (3,000 miles) from her own shores, while simultaneously fending off French, Spanish and even Dutch forces.

It was an outnumbered British army that found itself penned in at Yorktown and, more importantly, it was an

outmanoeuvred one. It was also, at the critical moment, deprived of support from the Royal Navy, which had previously ruled the waves along the American seaboard, offering both supply and a safe retreat for any British force near the coast.

The southern strategy

French intervention in the war, following the defeat of another British army at Saratoga in 1777, was expected to dramatically tip the scales in America's favour. The French could provide experienced soldiers, but naval support was far more important – in the first two campaigns of the war, British generals had been able to take for granted total superiority at sea.

But the French had proved unable or unwilling to make a decisive impact in the colonies,

preferring instead to concentrate efforts in the West Indies, where lucrative territories seemed ripe for picking off while Britain was distracted with the American war.

The British had therefore been able to regroup after the shock of Saratoga and refocus efforts in the southern colonies, capturing Charleston in May 1780 and then annihilating the last rebel army in the south at Camden the following August. When General Charles, Earl Cornwallis took his army into North Carolina and then Virginia in 1781, it looked like his aggressive leadership might finally subdue the south.

British intentions were to destroy any organised resistance in the southern colonies and then leave local peace-keeping in the

"BRITISH GENERALS HAD BEEN ABLE TO TAKE FOR GRANTED TOTAL SUPERIORITY AT SEA"



hands of loyalist forces, while Cornwallis's army moved on to pacify the next area. It was a promising strategy, but Cornwallis's army was small – only around 3,000 men – and his insistence on rapid movement meant loyalists were not given enough time to firmly establish themselves before the comforting presence of the redcoats was removed.

Moreover, American commanders were learning how to handle the British. At the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on 15 March 1781, the Americans offered a defence in depth and Cornwallis was forced to expend a quarter of his men for victory. Strategically, it was a disaster. The American commander, Nathanael Greene, then started to move his men back towards South Carolina, but Cornwallis had no appetite to follow and instead marched to link up with a small force, under the command of the American turncoat Benedict Arnold, on the Chesapeake.

Greene would go on to prise one British garrison after another out of their strongholds in South Carolina, undoing all of the good work of the preceding year. Cornwallis, meanwhile, was firmly on course for his date with destiny at Yorktown.

The road to Yorktown

The British forces under Cornwallis were some of the most experienced in the colonies. Hardened by campaigning, they made up a small but tough army. The problem was that combat and disease (especially since the war had shifted to the south) had whittled away their numbers. After linking up with Arnold's force, Cornwallis still had just over 8,000 men under his command.

With garrison troops dotted across the British-held territory, Cornwallis's army was the last mobile force Britain could deploy, and he still had ambitions of continuing his costly offensive: he saw the south as the only sensible region to pursue an active war. "If we

"THE BRITISH FORCES UNDER CORNWALLIS WERE SOME OF THE MOST EXPERIENCED IN THE COLONIES. HARDENED BY CAMPAIGNING, THEY MADE UP A SMALL BUT TOUGH ARMY"

mean an offensive war in America, we must abandon New York and bring our whole force into Virginia," Cornwallis wrote in a letter. "If our plan is defensive... let us quit the Carolinas."

After joining with Arnold in May, orders were received from the British commander-in-chief in New York, Sir Henry Clinton. He favoured an offensive move into Pennsylvania, but was against further operations in Virginia. If Cornwallis did not want to move into Pennsylvania, he was to hunker down in a favourable defensive spot. The favourable spots mentioned were Williamsburg and Yorktown.

The British command structure was fractured at this point. Clinton felt unable to control Cornwallis and was unsure in his own mind what to do. He saw the value of a sizeable army in the south, but he was also worried that a combined French-American force might be moving on New York. In reality, Britain was simply running out of men to both hold existing territory and threaten new areas.

By August, Cornwallis, in a rather deflated state of mind, was constructing defences at Yorktown (he also occupied and fortified the small village of Gloucester, across the York River). It was against his natural aggressive instincts, and his mood was not improved when a sizeable French fleet appeared off the coast at the end of the month.

The noose tightens

The French and Americans were already scenting an opportunity, but in order to trap Cornwallis they would need to pull off something remarkable. The American commander-in-chief, George Washington, was in the north along with a French force under the comte de Rochambeau. A small French fleet was based at Rhode Island, while the largest French fleet was in the West Indies. Pulling these disparate forces together would be, in the words of historian William B. Willcox, "as complicated and brilliant a combined operation as the eighteenth century witnessed."

The crucial element would be naval forces, but it was far from certain that the French would deliver in this department. The French fleet Cornwallis spotted off the coast on 31 August was commanded by the comte de Grasse. It was a powerful force of 27 warships – far more than anticipated by the British naval commander in the West Indies, Admiral George Brydges Rodney. De Grasse had confounded expectations to send such a large fleet north. Originally ordered only to cooperate with the Spanish in the West Indies, he discovered that they had no plans for operations and so offered his services to Rochambeau and Washington. Even then, it was expected that he would send only half of his fleet northwards, reserving the rest to escort French trade ships back to Europe.

Instead, de Grasse took the bold step of suspending the trade fleet and moving north with 27 ships of the line. Rodney expected him to send 14 and so detached just 14 of his own ships of the line to chase the French vessels.

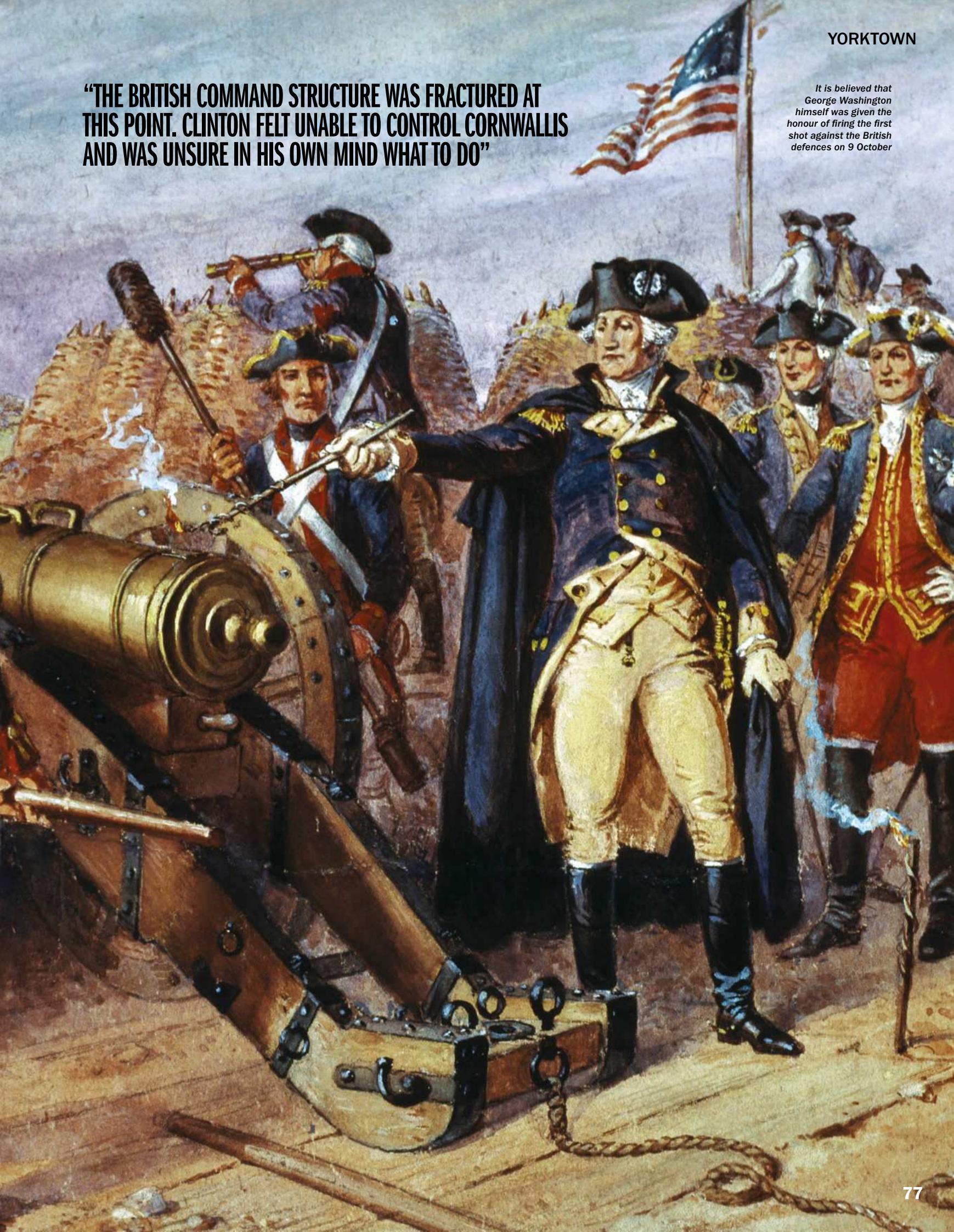
De Grasse's fleet also carried two valuable commodities – 3,000 French troops borrowed from Santo Domingo and a chest of Spanish gold, which would pay American troops and keep them in the field. The first piece of the French-American puzzle was falling into place. They would have naval superiority at Yorktown.

The French and British lines meet during the Battle of the Chesapeake. Although tactically a draw, it left the French in command of the seas off Yorktown



"THE BRITISH COMMAND STRUCTURE WAS FRACTURED AT THIS POINT. CLINTON FELT UNABLE TO CONTROL CORNWALLIS AND WAS UNSURE IN HIS OWN MIND WHAT TO DO"

It is believed that George Washington himself was given the honour of firing the first shot against the British defences on 9 October



On 19 August French and American troops on the Hudson began to move southwards. Clinton was convinced they could not be heading for the Chesapeake, believing the climate to be too oppressive for offensive operations at that time of year. Instead, he feared a move on Staten Island and conferred with the commander of the British fleet at New York, Admiral Thomas Graves.

Even when intelligence arrived that de Grasse was heading northwards with a large fleet, it was believed he was aiming for New York. It was part of an extensive series of missed opportunities for the British. The 14-ship squadron sent by Rodney to chase de Grasse actually overhauled the larger French fleet (the British ships had copper bottoms, which helped them cut through the water more easily), arriving at Yorktown a full five days before the French ships. The commander, Admiral Samuel Hood, believed the French must have already passed through on their way to New York, so he moved off again rather than staying.

Whether he could have fended off 27 French ships is a big question, but there may have been a chance of staging some sort of effective defence. Hood may also have had a chance of evacuating Cornwallis's army, but the army was not considered to be under threat. If Graves had thought to move his force of six ships to the south, he could have linked up with Hood and faced de Grasse's ships with genuine hopes of success.

Neither option was taken, leaving de Grasse in command of the coast when he arrived at the end of August, but all was not yet lost for the British. Hood continued to New York, joined forces with Graves and headed back to the south. On 5 September the two fleets met, with 19 British vessels facing 24 French ships, which headed out for the engagement.

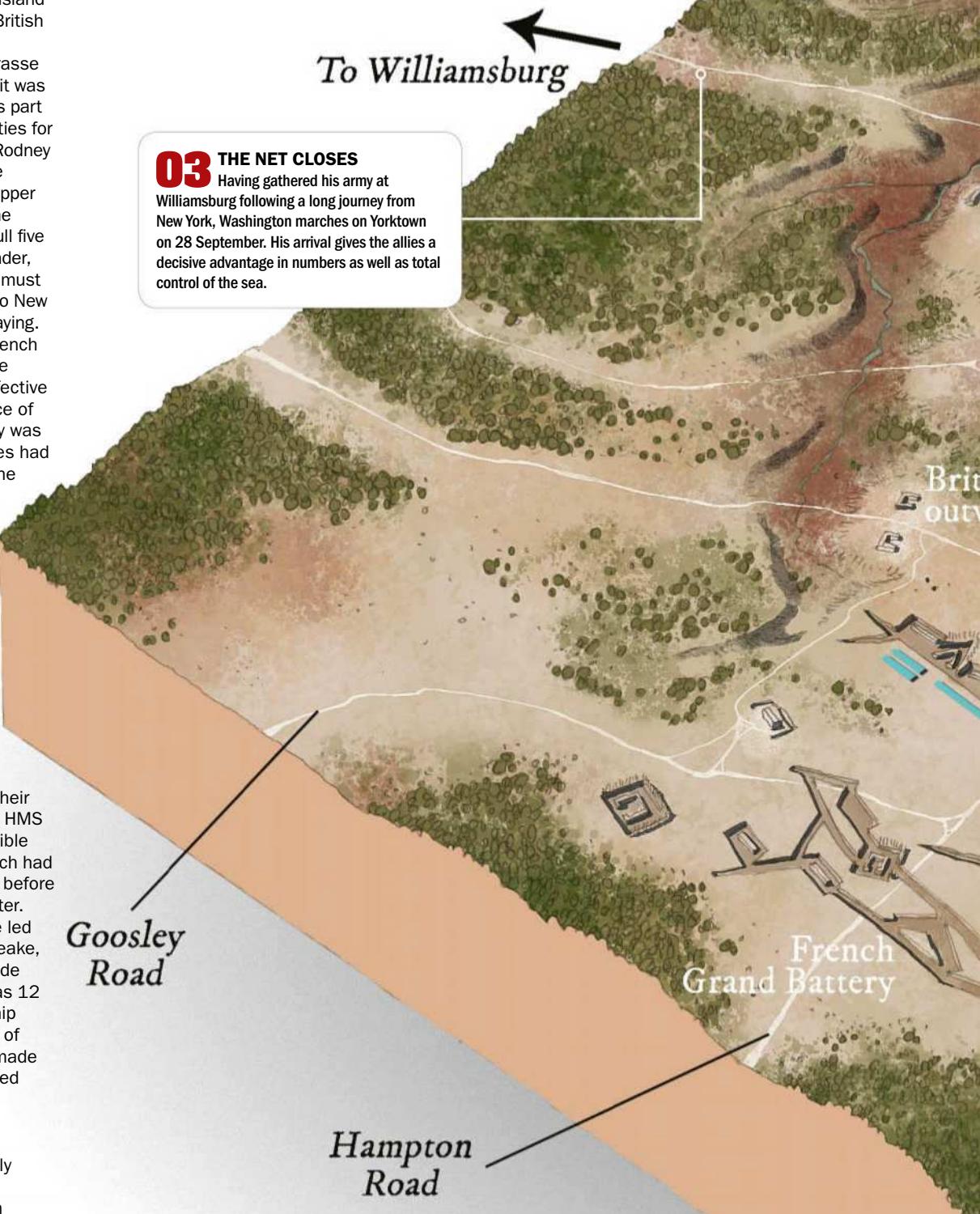
In an inconclusive encounter, both fleets suffered serious damage to five of their ships, but the British came off worst, with HMS Shrewsbury, Intrepid, Ajax, Alcide and Terrible nearly put out of action. HMS Terrible, which had been struggling to remain seaworthy even before the battle, had to be burned a few days later. Even worse for the British fleet, de Grasse led them away from the mouth of the Chesapeake, allowing the smaller French fleet from Rhode Island to safely make it into the river. It was 12 September before Graves could send a ship to look into the Chesapeake to take stock of the situation. The increased French fleet made further action impossible and Graves limped back to New York to refit.

Cornwallis outnumbered

The French fleet from Rhode Island not only tipped the scales decisively at sea, it also brought a siege train of heavy cannon with which to attack Yorktown. Two days after Graves left Cornwallis to his fate, that fate began to take shape in the form of the combined American and French army under Washington and Rochambeau. The first units reached Williamsburg, near Yorktown, on 14 September and Washington continued to gather and organise his force for the next two weeks.

Cornwallis was pondering an attack on the army penning him in at Yorktown. He was on the verge of authorising a desperate breakout

YORKTOWN 1781



“ALTHOUGH TACTICALLY A DRAW, THE NAVAL ENGAGEMENT OFF THE COAST OF YORKTOWN ON 5 SEPTEMBER IS A STRATEGIC DISASTER FOR THE BRITISH, WHO LEAVE THE FRENCH IN CONTROL OF THE SEA”

Fusiliers' Redoubt



07 THE LAST RESISTANCE
A futile and largely symbolic sortie is led by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Abercrombie on the morning of 16 October. Light infantry and grenadiers under his command manage to spike several French guns, but they are back in action within hours.

05 THE FIRST PARALLEL
With the guidance of experienced French engineers and the legendary Prussian officer Baron von Steuben, the allied army completes its first parallel and has artillery in place by 9 October. The bombardment of the British defences commences.

- British Unit
- Hessian Unit
- French Unit
- American Unit

attempt when a letter arrived from Clinton on 14 September, full of optimism about a potential relief effort. Admiral Robert Digby was on his way from Britain with ships and reinforcements. Together with the fleet already at New York, it would add up to a force strong enough to evacuate Cornwallis. This hopeful vision swayed Cornwallis, and he called off his planned offensive.

It was to prove a disastrous mistake, and the last window of opportunity had closed. Washington began moving on Yorktown on 28 September, and his men began to draw up opposite the British defensive works the following day. With around 6,000 Continental troops and thousands of Virginia militia, Washington was more than a match for Cornwallis's bedraggled army, which was already suffering badly from camp sicknesses, notably malaria. The 4,000 French troops with Rochambeau joined the 3,000 from de Grasse's fleet, as well as 5,000 sailors released for service on land, to make the allies' numerical advantage decisive.

The problem facing the British was serious. Siege works tended to follow a remorseless pattern, and unless a serious mistake was made by the besieging army, it usually ended in capitulation. A series of 'parallels' would be constructed – trenches running parallel to the defensive works. The first would provide cover for the next parallel, which would be closer to the target.

Cornwallis knew exactly how relentless the progress of a siege could be, having taken part in the capture of Charleston the previous year. His only hope was to delay the advance of the parallel trenches until he could be rescued by Clinton. This could be achieved by his own artillery, and by launching sorties from his lines to disrupt the allies' work. His next move was therefore puzzling.

On the morning of 29 September, Washington was shocked to find that Cornwallis had evacuated his outer line during the night. The extensive works, including several formidable redoubts, might have held the Americans at bay for some time, but Cornwallis felt he did not have

enough men to hold it against such superior numbers. His much shorter interior line would therefore be called upon. The decision has been criticised and certainly shortened the siege by a few days at least, but with something like 3,000 men out of action with illness, Cornwallis obviously felt he had no choice.

There was also the matter of another letter from Clinton, which arrived that night and talked of a relief effort, including 5,000 men, leaving New York by 5 October. Cornwallis believed he had to hold out for just a few more days.

The siege opens

The inner line would still present an obstacle. Two redoubts protected Yorktown's right flank, with three guarding the left. Three more sat at the rear of the town to cover the coast. By far the most important, however, were two further redoubts in front of the left flank, redoubts Nine and Ten. A more substantial position, known as the 'Fusiliers' Redoubt', was retained, well in advance of the right flank, and was supported by Royal Navy ships in the York River.

Cornwallis had scratch together 65 pieces of artillery, including some scavenged from the navy, and he arranged these in 14 batteries through his defensive works (there were 20 more cannon in the Gloucester defences). They would make life uncomfortable for the American and French soldiers constructing their approaches, but the biggest guns at his disposal were 18-pounders. Once Washington had his batteries erected, he would be able to aim 24-pounders at the British works. It would be a hopeless mismatch.

Skirmishing broke out in front of the Fusiliers' Redoubt as the Americans took possession of the outer perimeter and probed forwards, and the infamous light cavalry commander Banastre Tarleton led a raid that carried off the American officer Alexander Scammell, but this was little more than sparring. The real work was yet to begin.

The French engineers with Washington knew their trade, so Cornwallis would normally have started to launch sorties as soon as siege

Cornwallis faces up to the enormity of his failure, surrendering his army to the combined French-American force



works began. Instead, he remained surprisingly passive. British artillery raged at the men converting the outer defensive perimeter into an offensive platform, but no sorties were launched. Perhaps Cornwallis would do more as the Americans came closer – the outer defensive line was about 0.8 kilometres (0.5 miles) from the inner works.

The British bombardment caused few casualties but did impede building on the lines, because every time the Americans saw a muzzle flash they took cover. The British, already running low on ammunition, began to ignite powder in the muzzles of their guns to simulate shots. The effect on the American soldiers was much the same, but a precious cannonball was not wasted.

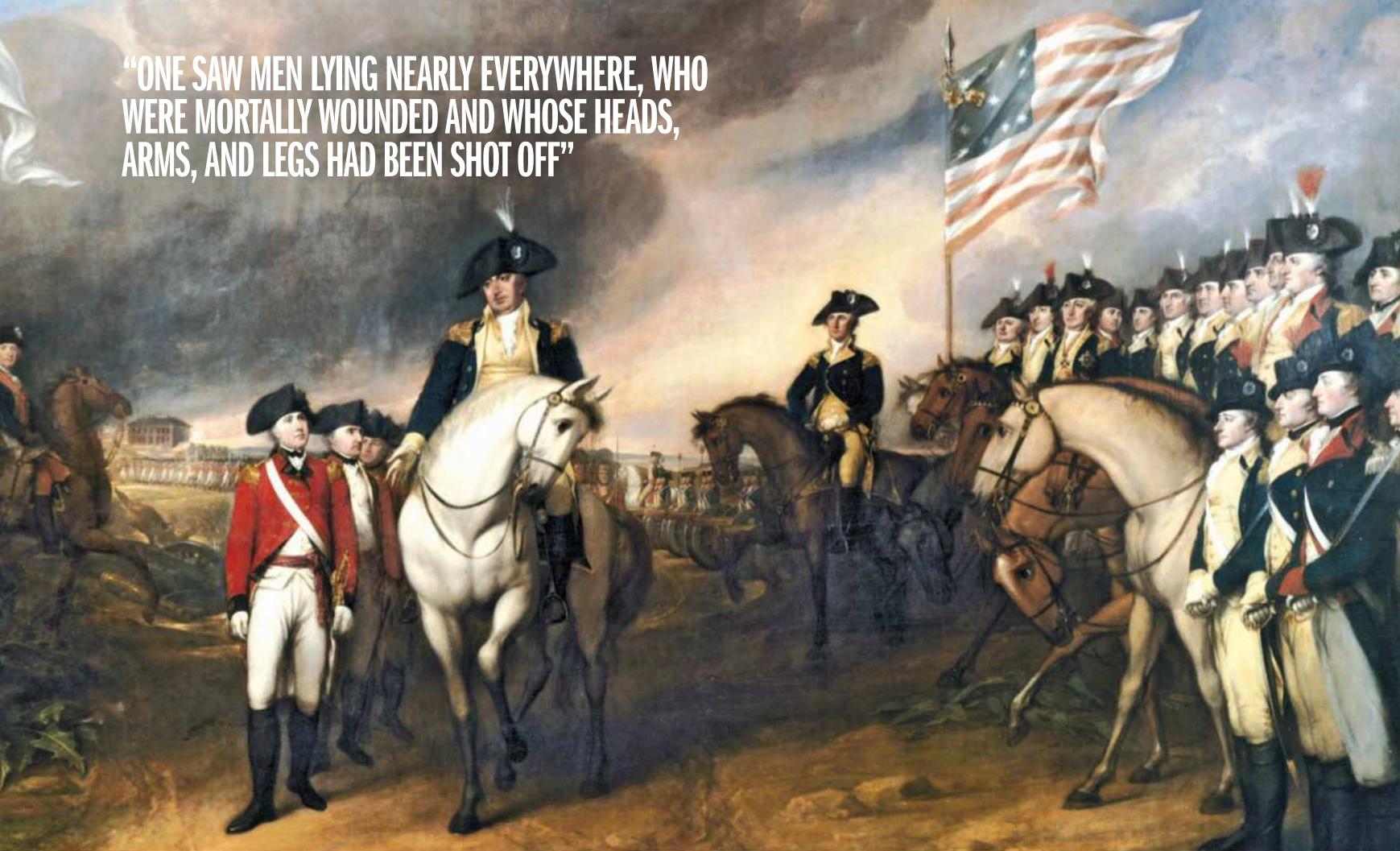
The early days of October also saw the last serious move by the British, with Tarleton leading a raid from Gloucester, in which he fought an inconclusive battle with French light cavalry and infantry. It was to be the last act of one of the most controversial figures of the entire war, as the French then bottled him up with the rest of the British garrison at Gloucester.

On 7 October, Cornwallis surveyed the land in front of his lines to see that the Americans had begun work on their first parallel, to the front of his left flank. A second, diversionary trench had been dug in front of the Fusiliers' Redoubt, where the 23rd Regiment was based. The Americans started to construct batteries in the first parallel, but still Cornwallis did not launch raids against them. By 9 October, the

Rochambeau consults with Washington. The siege could not have succeeded without the close cooperation between American and French forces



"ONE SAW MEN LYING NEARLY EVERYWHERE, WHO WERE MORTALLY WOUNDED AND WHOSE HEADS, ARMS, AND LEGS HAD BEEN SHOT OFF"



allies were ready to begin their bombardment of the British line.

It proved to be spectacular. "We could find no refuge in or out of town," wrote one of the German troops with Cornwallis. "The people fled to the waterside and hid in hastily contrived shelters on the banks, but many of them were killed by bursting bombs." Cornwallis's headquarters were destroyed and he resorted to holding staff meetings in a cave from that point.

The following day Cornwallis heard from Clinton again. The relief effort was now not anticipated to leave New York before 12 October. Cornwallis had been expecting its imminent arrival. As more American and French batteries became serviceable throughout the day, the bombardment of Yorktown increased in severity. HMS Charon was struck by heated shot, caught fire and sank, and the British artillery was steadily silenced as guns were hit.

Two more allied batteries opened up on 11 October, and Cornwallis was becoming desperate. "Nothing but a direct move to York River, which includes a successful naval action, can save me," he informed Clinton.

The second parallel

The construction of the second parallel brought defeat closer for the British. The allies were now as close as 180 metres (200 yards) from the British lines. Another German soldier noted the scene in Yorktown: "One saw men lying nearly everywhere, who were mortally wounded and whose heads, arms, and legs had been

shot off. Also one saw wounded continually dragged and carried down by the water."

In order to complete the second parallel, however, redoubts Nine and Ten needed to be captured. With more and more British guns out of action, the artillery duel had become one-sided, and Washington now pummelled the two redoubts for three days in preparation for an assault. Redoubt Nine held around 120 men, Hessians and British, while Redoubt Ten held around 70. Washington decided to attack during the night of 14 October.

The redoubts were strongly constructed and protected by fraise work (sharpened stakes) and abatis (chopped down trees with their branches sharpened and facing the enemy). They were no match, however, for a determined assault. A force of 400 American light infantry was allocated Redoubt Ten, with 400 French troops tackling Nine.

The noise of axes at work alerted the garrison of Redoubt Ten – the Americans were cutting their way through the abatis that protected the position. Hand grenades hurled by the British inflicted some casualties, but they were quickly overwhelmed by the onrushing Americans, who charged with unloaded muskets. It had cost Washington just nine dead and 31 injured to capture the position and all the redcoats in it.

Redoubt Nine inflicted a heavier toll on the attackers. Held up by the abatis, the French suffered badly from musket fire from the garrison before they could make their numbers tell. The attackers lost 15 killed and 77 wounded, and

just over half of the garrison escaped, although 18 were killed and 50 taken prisoner.

The two redoubts were quickly absorbed into the second parallel, plunging Cornwallis into despair. "The safety of the place is therefore so precarious," he wrote to Clinton, "that I cannot recommend that the fleet and army should run great risk in endeavouring to save us."

Perhaps aware that his passivity in the face of the allied advance might be questioned, Cornwallis organised a symbolic sortie during the early hours of 16 October, and then tried a desperate evacuation of Yorktown. Bad weather foiled this last attempt to escape the carefully laid trap he had found himself in, and on the following morning Cornwallis surrendered.

The last offensive force the British had in the field had been eliminated. Legend has it that the band played *The World Turned Upside Down* as the garrison marched out to lay down its arms. This is debated (some claim there were no musicians in Cornwallis's army), but a more apt tune could hardly have been chosen. The American War of Independence was all but lost.

FURTHER READING

- CORNWALLIS AND THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, FRANKLIN AND MARY WICKWIRE
- YORKTOWN 1781: THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, BRENDAN MORISSEY
- FUSILIERS, HOW THE BRITISH ARMY LOST AMERICA BUT LEARNED TO FIGHT, MARK URBAN

THE THIRD REICH IN PHOTOS THE INTERIM YEARS 1918-1938

THESE RARE AND REVEALING IMAGES PROVIDE SNAPSHOTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN NAZI GERMANY, AND TELL THE STORY OF THE COUNTRY'S DANGEROUS PATH TO WWII

WORDS PAUL GARSON

ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE WORLD WAR STUTTGART, 1916

This image on the cover of the *Illustrated History of the World War* was published around 1916. Germans in tell-tale spike helmets (Pickelhaube) and their Austro-Hungarian allies are depicted as heroically charging into battle. Once the truth behind such propaganda images became realised, the carnage of the war shocked civilisation to its core, regardless of nationality. In the wake of bloodshed on such a vast scale, long-secure world views of history, humankind, religion, economics and morality were left in ruins.

Whole generations of British, French, Belgian, German, Austrian and Russian young men disappeared into the muddy mayhem of protracted trench warfare, where the term 'No-Man's-Land' took on a whole new meaning for the future of armed conflict. The toxic seeds of a future war lay sown into the bloody mire of the battle-scarred European landscape. Its societies were left festering with open wounds that never properly healed, especially in Germany, which saw itself as a victim of treachery and subject to onerous post-war punishment.

German military and radical political leaders foisted the 'stabbed in the back' excuse for Germany's loss of the war, its loyal soldiers purportedly betrayed by conniving politicians and Jewish anti-German forces. Hyperinflation in 1923-1925 struck hard: the German monetary system was destroyed and inflation soared to disastrous heights, while the worldwide financial collapse of the 1929 Great Depression caused mass unemployment, leaving the average German floundering in a seemingly rudderless society. Battles raged on the streets between rival right and left-wing groups, the threat of Communism crashed head-on with ultra-nationalists – among them the nascent Nazi Party rising to the top of the violent stew of conflicting ideologies.

The German populace, having been torn apart externally by World War I and internally by violent political upheaval and economic despair, now looked for a way out, grasping for some straw of hope for a return of stability and prosperity, the angst increased by their self-conception of Germany as the intellectual, technological and creative leader of Europe. Hitler and his avowed goals of re-establishing Teutonic glory and national dominance found a ready audience.

The following original photographs chronicle the events during that interim between two world wars: a 20-year so-called 'peace', during which the turmoil in Germany metastasized into the ascension to power of the Nazis. With Adolf Hitler at the helm of the Third Reich, Nazi social planners would begin fashioning a new state of blood and steel from which would spring the Götterdämmerung of World War II.



"ONCE THE TRUTH BEHIND THE PROPAGANDA IMAGES BECAME KNOWN, THE CARNAGE OF THE WAR SHOCKED CIVILISATION TO ITS CORE"



CHAOS AND FLAMETHROWERS IN THE STREETS

GENERAL STRIKES, BERLIN, 1923

The French and Belgian military occupation of the Ruhr valley, Germany's major industrial production centre, was prompted by a failure of payment for post-war reparations. In protest, workers staged a prolonged strike encouraged by the Weimar government, which led to hyperinflation. The price of a loaf of bread skyrocketed to 80 billion marks by October. In the photo, civilian police and army troops have brought out a flamethrower and machine gun. The failed strike was called off in September 1923. The photo was sold as a commercial postcard.

MUNICH STREET DEMONSTRATION JULY, 1925

SA 'Brownshirts' parade through their headquarters city's rain-soaked streets. Rifles are held ready by the Weimar Republic's soldiers, who stand aside as the demonstrators pass. An intrepid cameraman snaps his photo as he himself is caught by another unseen camera. The Nazi Party had been banned by the Weimar government due to its inflammatory activities, but the ban was lifted in January 1925.

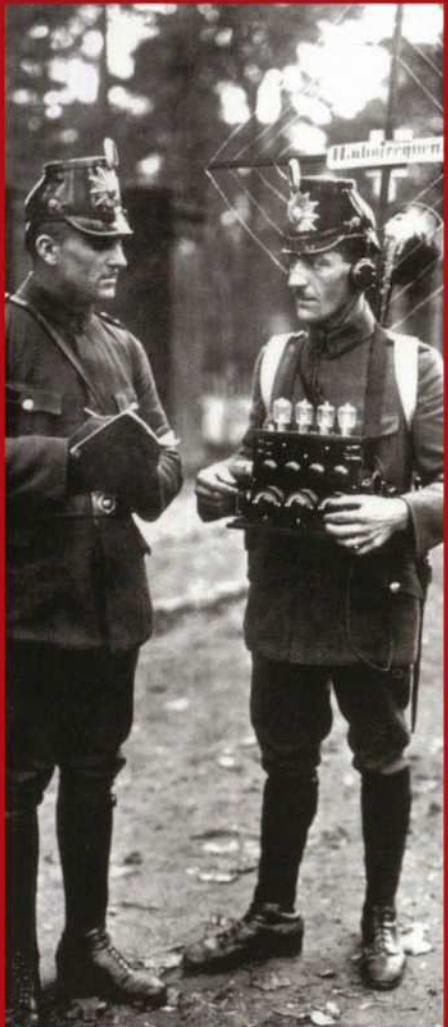
The Sturmabteilung or 'Storm Detachment' marched to the commands of the charismatic thug Ernst Röhm. Members of the SA were charged initially with protecting the Nazi Party leaders and for spearheading street battles with Communists and rival right-wing opponents. In March of that same year the SS was formed and was initially known as the 'Black Order'. Consisting of only eight men, it would serve as the foundation for an infamous organisation that would eventually number over 1 million.

"THE STURMABTEILUNG OR 'STORM DETACHMENT' MARCHED TO THE COMMANDS OF THE CHARISMATIC THUG ERNST RÖHM"



STATE OF THE ART MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

AUTUMN, 1925



Two Berlin civilian policemen, wearing their traditional 'Shako' helmets, pose with the latest wireless transceiver equipment, including a massive tube radio, antenna and rear-facing 'horn' speaker. Often well-armed, they, along with regular Reichswehr soldiers, were employed by the Weimar authorities to deal with the street demonstrations that often resorted to gunfire. Later the police would be assimilated under Himmler's SS control.



TEMPORARY RISE OF THE BROWNSHIRTS

MUNICH, AUTUMN 1929

Disorderly, prone to violence and bent on radical revolution, the Brownshirts, numbering some 2 million, eventually posed a threat to Himmler's SS as well as Hitler's attempts to court the favour of the regular German army, which saw the SA as a dangerous rabble.

In order to gain the military leaders' support, Hitler ordered the SS to purge the SA leadership. On 4 June 1934, in what became known as the 'Night of the Long Knives', several hundred SA men were arrested and executed, including Röhm, once Hitler's close friend and early ardent supporter. In this photograph, joining his comrades, Hitler's lieutenant, Rudolf Hess (second from left), stares into the camera.

"IN ORDER TO GAIN THE MILITARY LEADERS' SUPPORT, HITLER ORDERED THE SS TO PURGE THE SA LEADERSHIP"

MEETING ROOM - SA & SS MINGLE IN A GERMAN RESTAURANT

MUNICH, 1930

Nazi Party devotees would often gather for some friendly Gemütlichkeit and a few beers in their local rathskeller. The notorious 8 November 1923 'Beer Hall Putsch' took place in

a similar establishment located in Munich – the Bürgerbräukeller – when Hitler and his cohorts sought to overthrow the state government of Bavaria, the first phase of supplanting the legitimate Weimar Republic leadership.

Planning for the 'revolution' began in 1921 after Hitler took control of the German Workers' Party and changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Hundreds

joined Hitler for the beer hall event, during which he announced, with a gunshot, that the "National Revolution" had begun. The shot hit the ceiling and the plan lost steam quickly as police and military took control, with several killed on both sides. After hiding out in an attic for two days, Hitler was arrested, tried and sentenced to a five-year prison term, but managed to use the trial to promote his cause.



TIMELINE 1918-39

1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1925	1926	1928	1929	1930
WWI ends on 11 November	In January, leaders of the failed left-wing Spartacist Uprising are arrested and shot; In June the Treaty of Versailles is signed	In March disenfranchised veterans of the Freikorps attempt a failed right-wing putsch against the government	Reparations payments begin; Hitler takes on the leadership of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NDSAP); the SA is founded under Ernst Röhm	Burdened by post-war reparations, Germany defaults on making payments; in March the Hitler Jugend is formed	In January French and Belgian troops occupy the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, to ensure payments are made. By September hyperinflation makes government-issued paper money useless	SS (Schutzstaffel) is founded as Hitler's personal bodyguard	Germany joins the League of Nations	In August the US, UK, Italy and Germany sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact, agreeing to forego war except in self-defence	Wall Street Crash; unemployment in the Weimar Republic reaches 1.8 million	German unemployment reaches 3.2 million

BREAKFAST WITH MEIN KAMPF

MUNICH, 1931

A hausfrau has set a balcony table with a pair of kitschy salt and pepper shakers and a vase of flowers, while her husband intently peruses a book of special interest.

Hitler served less than a year of his prison term, during which he managed to dictate *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle') to Rudolf Hess. The book, published in 1925, was a rambling manifesto for National Socialism and its blueprint for remaking Germany and dealing with its enemies. Millions of copies were sold in Germany and worldwide. Ten years after the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch, Hitler would grasp the reigns of power in the new Third Reich.

"MEIN KAMPF, PUBLISHED IN 1925, WAS A RAMBLING MANIFESTO FOR NATIONAL SOCIALISM AND ITS BLUEPRINT FOR REMAKING GERMANY AND DEALING WITH ITS ENEMIES"

**CASTING VOTE FOR DICTATORSHIP**

BERLIN, SUMMER 1934

On 24 August a plebiscite on whether to grant Hitler dictatorial powers received 89.93 per cent approval from the German public.

1931

Hitler becomes chancellor in January

1932

German unemployment reaches 6 million and the bread lines grow

1933

In February the Reichstag burns, a crime tied to Communists, resulting in 4,000 arrests. In March Hitler is granted total power by the Enabling Act, voted in by the German population; in April Goebbels motivates the burning of 'non-German' books; first concentration camps established; in secret, Germany begins re-armament

1934

In March Hitler has a setback when he fails to take control of Austria after Mussolini, having a treaty with Austria, intervenes. In June, Hitler and Himmler strike against the SA and Röhm is killed. In August, Hitler combines the positions of chancellor and president to become the supreme leader – the *führer*; the military and civilians are required to take an oath to support Hitler

1935

In January, as a result of a plebiscite in which 90 per cent vote yes, the Saar industrial area is returned to Germany after its loss as part of the Treaty of Versailles. In September the Nuremberg Laws, excluding Jews from citizenship and rights, are passed

1937

In November the Anti-Comintern Pact, aimed against the Soviet Union, is signed with Japan; Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy sign Rome-Berlin Axis pact

1938

In March, Hitler is successful in assimilating Austria into the German Reich after the vast majority of Austrians vote yes; in October Germany occupies Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland without a shot fired, as the result of 'appeasement' in the hope of preventing war

1939

In August the Molotov-Rippentrop pact is signed between USSR and Germany, allowing for both to mutually attack Poland in September

PROSPEROUS ARYAN GERMAN FAMILY

BERLIN TIERGARTEN PARK, SUMMER 1935

Dressed for the occasion, a family poses for a portrait, their Hitler-Jugend (HJ) son the centre of attention. The mother wears a summer flower frock and fashionable shoes while the father wears a Nazi Party pin and carries a cane, possibly a result of WWI service. The boy, in his Hitler Youth uniform, has

hooked his hand over his belt, a pose reminiscent of one often assumed by Hitler during public appearances and official photos. By 1935, 60 per cent of German youth were HJ members, its programs supplanting both family and school as the main form of mass education/indoctrination.

"BY 1935, 60 PER CENT OF GERMAN YOUTH WERE HJ MEMBERS, ITS PROGRAMS SUPPLANTING FAMILY AND SCHOOL AS THEIR MAIN FORM OF MASS EDUCATION"

**GERMANY'S PRACTICE WAR**

MADRID, 1936

A German officer, who has brought his camera to Spain, poses with his adjutants and one of Franco's generals. Hitler had supplied men and materiel in support of the civil war that erupted in July 1936 between fascist and republican forces. Franco's victory established the third far-right state in Europe, along with Germany and Italy. The Spanish conflict ended on 1 April 1939, exactly five months prior to Germany's invasion of Poland.



TRANSFORMATION OF A NEW RECRUIT

BERLIN, AUTUMN 1936

A nattily dressed man has just arrived for military service, much to the amusement of the NCOs greeting him. Compulsory military conscription was re-established in 1936 as Germany re-armed at a lightning pace, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles.



A PRE-WAR VISIT TO THE TOMB OF GERMANY'S HEROES EAST PRUSSIA, 1937

Wehrmacht troops pose for a photo with their massive WWI forebears at the Reichsheldenmal Tannenberg. Built in 1927 in Hohenstein, East Prussia (now Olsztynek, Poland), the massive structure was a memorial to the fallen soldiers of the 1914 Battle of Tannenberg – the historic defeat of Russian forces by a German army led by Paul von Hindenburg.

Although in poor health at 85, Hindenburg was asked to run in the 1932 presidential

election as the only candidate capable of defeating Hitler. Although Hindenburg won, the German public, as well as members of the military and industry, demanded Hitler be given the chancellorship. Hindenburg gave way, signing the Enabling Act of 1933, which was the start of Hitler's takeover of the government. Soon afterwards, Hindenburg, 'The Father of the Fatherland', died on 2 August 1934 and was interred at Tannenberg.

STEPPING CLOSER TO WAR

BERLIN, FEBRUARY 1938

A young soldier manages to mimic the Hitler salute with his booted foot. However, the infamous marching style was reserved for special events, as it was deemed too physically damaging for regular use. In 1938 Nazi Germany brought Austria under its control, as well as a large part of Czechoslovakia, and then aimed its sights towards Poland. The invasion and world war commenced on 1 September 1939.



GRAVES OF THE FALKLANDS

It's important to remember that the Falklands War not only saved the islanders from Argentina – it also freed Argentina from Galtieri's right-wing military junta & created an opportunity for democracy to flourish

WORDS ROBIN HORSFALL

In 1982, driven by a need to distract his population away from a failing economy and the murderous actions of his secret police, Leopoldo Galtieri sent a powerfully armed force to occupy the Falkland Islands. The 60 Royal Marines based in Port Stanley were heavily outnumbered and given no option after a heroic three hour battle. They would have fought on, but Governor Rex

Hunt made the decision to call a surrender to prevent civilian casualties.

The Foreign Office had withdrawn the only support ship from the Antarctic. This act sent the message to Argentina that the UK was uninterested in the islands. No one imagined that Margaret Thatcher would deploy her armed forces nearly 13,000 kilometres (8,000 miles) to recover such a 'worthless possession'.

Soldiers fight wars, they don't start them, and yet as always it is the families of soldiers that carry the burden. The mothers, fathers, children and siblings truly pay the price of war. In 1982, 649 Argentine and 255 British soldiers died in the 74-day war. The majority of Argentinian soldiers who served during the conflict were recent conscripts who had just finished their training. As the British forces

"ON A HILLTOP OUTSIDE DARWIN ON EAST FALKLAND, AT THE ARGENTINE CEMETERY, 121 ARGENTINIAN SOLDIERS WERE INTERRED IN GRAVES LABELLED 'NO NAME'"



fought from west to east towards Port Stanley, reports of Argentinian soldiers chained to machine guns to prevent retreat were passed through the ranks. Outclassed and out-maneuvered by a professional volunteer army, the conscripts had no stomach for the fight and they died, many would claim, in vain.

The Falklands War was an unusual engagement for modern warfare: two adversaries, backed by their governments, engaged in open warfare with air, sea and land forces. Most modern battlefields involve insurgents in guerrilla warfare. Cruel and uncompromising, such wars have relinquished all sense of honour and acceptable behaviour. Both sides in the South Atlantic behaved with remarkable restraint outside of the heat of battle. Prisoners were treated well and were returned promptly at the end of the campaign. There were no reported atrocities. Wars fought in this mode have the advantage of retaining less animosity, especially among those who actually fought and risked their lives. When the battles are over and the guns go quiet soldiers often harbour a respect and sympathy for their former adversaries. This is not the case where terrorism and senseless murder are the methods used.

The families of the dead paid and still pay the price. On a hilltop outside Darwin on East Falkland, at the Argentine cemetery, 121 Argentinian soldiers were interred in graves labelled 'No name'. In 2018, DNA research by the Red Cross has identified 90 of these lost

souls. Families have a need for closure, and no decent person could deny a relative the opportunity to say farewell to a son, and for that son to have a grave with a headstone that bears his name. I admire and approve of the diplomatic accord that has allowed parents and siblings to visit the islands. Perhaps this is a positive step towards a future with less tension.

Time is the great healer, and it is reassuring that sufficient time has passed to allow the families to visit the graves and to know where their long-lost relatives are laid to rest. Gone is the hatred and jingoism, gone are the guns and helmets. The landmines still erupt from the ground occasionally (mostly to the detriment of the sheep) but the Falkland Islands today are at peace and, just as importantly, so is Argentina.

The argument still continues, with new Argentinian governments continuing to lay claim to 'Islas Malvinas', especially during times of economic instability, but democracies rarely start wars. The passions still run deep on both sides. In 2012, one month after the 30th anniversary of the Argentinian surrender, a glass case overlooking the cemetery that contained an image Argentina's patron saint, the Virgin of Luján, was fired upon and smashed. This of course drew justified emotional protests from Argentina.

Before 1982 there was a trend towards the islands becoming part of Argentina. The farmers and fishermen sold their produce in South America, and travel to and from the mainland

was almost unrestricted. Had Galtieri's invasion not taken place, it could be argued that the islands would today be named the Malvinas. Today the UK quite rightly refuses to relinquish sovereignty of the islands. A democratic referendum held in 2013 voted overwhelmingly for the islands to remain a British protectorate.

The value of the Falklands to the UK could be viewed as mostly symbolic today. They represent a victory of democracy over autocracy, good against evil or right against wrong. Too many young soldiers died for the British victory for sovereignty to be put aside by diplomats and politicians. That sacrifice will need another 30 years, when those of us that fought are ancient history not only to Britain but also to the Falkland islanders.

Perceived weakness is always taken advantage of in politics, and if war is an extension of politics, it is weakness that leads to war. Communication, trade, cooperation and assistance are the bywords of peaceful politics. Both countries – the UK and Argentina – need more of this. The actions of the Red Cross and the visits of the bereaved are one small step towards a stable and prosperous future.

History carries lessons for all governments. Once war starts, it follows the 'law of unknown consequences', which Galtieri learned too late and to his cost. His loss was nothing compared to the price paid by the families visiting the Argentine cemetery at Darwin. 31 sets of remains are still unidentified today.



Robin Horsfall served in Second Battalion The Parachute Regiment and the SAS for ten years, before working in security roles around the world. Today he is an inspirational after-dinner speaker and writer. His book *The Words Of The Wise Old Paratrooper* is available on Kindle

The Argentine cemetery on East Falkland holds the graves of 237 Argentinian soldiers killed during the conflict



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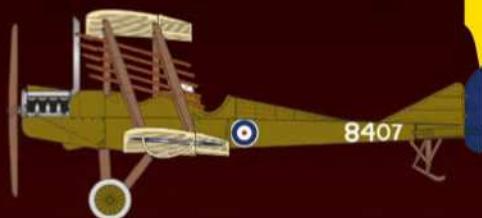
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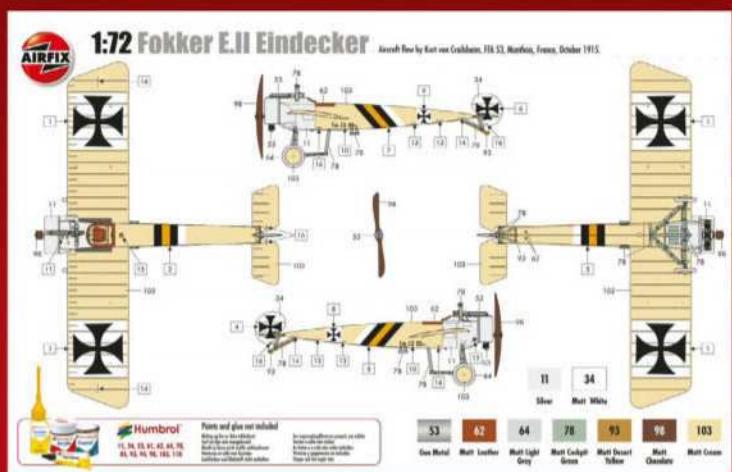
During this final centenary year of WWI, it's staggering to reflect on just how far military technology has developed in 100 years. Nowhere is this more apparent than in aviation, where just a century ago airmen from several nations were embarking on an entirely new type of warfare.

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The Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c night fighter was on the frontline of Britain's air defences against German airship raids. Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson famously flew these planes and earned the Victoria Cross after becoming the first pilot to down a German airship over Britain, in September 1916.

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REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books to hit the shelves

JULIUS CAESAR

AN ENTERTAINING ACCOUNT OF THE HUGELY ACCOMPLISHED STATESMAN AND GENERAL WHO WAS KILLED IN THE SENATE HOUSE

Author: Patricia Southern **Price:** £20.00 **Publisher:** Amberley Publishing **Released:** Out now

Julius Caesar was one of the long-vanished breed of statesman and general. The suave Roman patrician who ruled his empire with dictatorial powers was seen by his supporters as a defender of the people against an entrenched political oligarchy. On the other hand, Caesar was also an ambitious demagogue, who played a key role in bringing down the Roman Republic. That he was gifted, there can be little doubt. In his 56-year lifespan, he excelled in leading his Roman legions, in politics, in letters, in oratory (which he studied in Rhodes) and in social grace.

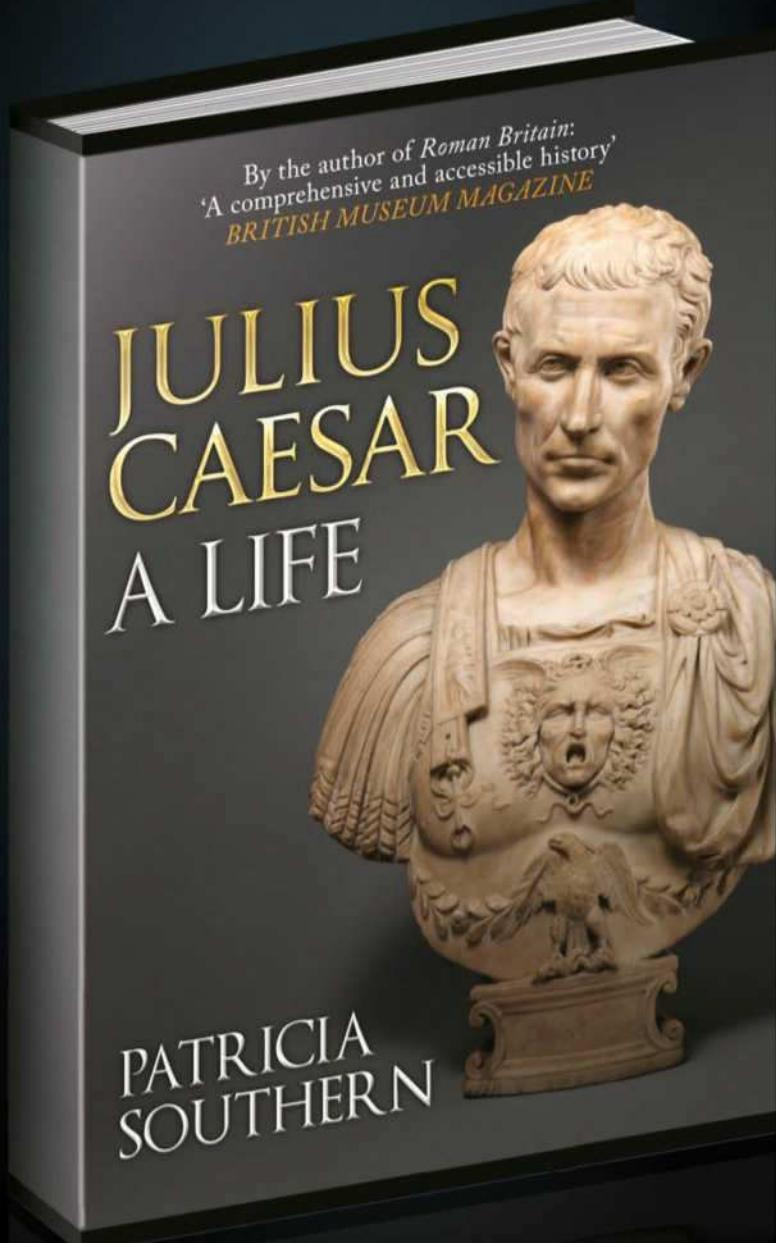
In this new biography, Patricia Southern demonstrates that the fall of a tyrant is often attended by unforeseen negative consequences. Caesar was struck down in the Senate House on 15 March 44 BCE, the infamous 'Ides of March'. The conspirators delivered 23 stab wounds to their enemy. By doing so, they unleashed decades of instability and civil war. Its a pattern repeated many times in history, to the present day: witness the chaos that reigns in Libya following the murder of Gaddafi, or the violence engulfing Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Caesar's heir Octavius, who was known as Augustus when he became Rome's first emperor, with some irony served as the promoter of Caesar's legend, which was kneaded and manipulated to form the story we know today. This was an act of sheer self-interest, but Augustus "needed the more comfortable aspects of Caesar's achievements to shore up his power and influence", according to the author.

The list of achievements was, to say the least, nothing short of remarkable. In 61 BCE, before his 40th birthday, Caesar succeeded in putting down banditry and guerrilla wars in Spain, a feat Napoleon's forces failed to accomplish some 1,900 years later in the same country. The following year Caesar organised the First Triumvirate, installing himself alongside the military commander Pompey and Crassus, the wealthiest citizen in Rome. Shortly thereafter Caesar firmly validated his military credentials in the Gallic Wars, after which he had all of Gaul reduced to Roman control. There then followed the invasion of Britain and the establishment of Roman power in this land. These campaigns proved him one of the greatest commanders in history, revealing a consummate military genius characterised by rapid judgement and an indomitable energy.

Caesar's power and undoubtedly his brilliant success in the field of battle had awakened great resentment. This was ultimately to bring about his downfall, fuelled to an extent by a fear among a sector of the Senate of what would today go by the name of cult of personality. This situation even became intolerable to some of his most trusted friends and protégés.

"In the last years of his life," Southern recounts, "Caesar combined charisma and arrogance with his absolute powers." Even Cicero could not fail to be overawed and charmed in his presence. The month before Caesar's murder, he had accepted the dictatorship of Rome for life. A few weeks later he was to leave for Parthia with an army to avenge a Roman defeat, while behind his back there had already been delicate talk of removing him from power. The assassination conspiracy was now set in stone. Southern, an acknowledged expert on the history of ancient Rome, offers a detailed analysis of this tragedy, along with an entertaining account of Caesar's greatness.



"THESE CAMPAIGNS PROVED HIM ONE OF THE GREATEST COMMANDERS IN HISTORY"

THUD PILOT

A PILOT'S ACCOUNT OF EARLY F-105 COMBAT IN VIETNAM

VIC VIZCARRA HAS WRITTEN AN EXCITING AND DETAILED ACCOUNT OF HIS DRAMATIC AIR WAR DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

Author: Victor Vizcarra **Publisher:** Fonthill Media **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

The Vietnam War arguably defined the post-1945 era for many people. It has remained lodged in the popular imagination as a conflict of bedraggled American infantrymen fighting in humid conditions, the unseen but deadly Viet Cong and the constant deafening rotor blades of UH-1 Iroquois 'Huey' helicopters.

Nevertheless, the skies over Vietnam also roared with the sound of larger aircraft such as B-52 Stratofortresses that conducted huge bombing raids against the north of the country. Despite the overpowering appearance of the B-52, it was actually the significantly smaller F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber that conducted 75 per cent of bombing missions over North Vietnam. The men who flew the F-105 were known as 'Thud' pilots, but their story has been surprisingly underwritten until recently.

Thud Pilot is written by Vic Vizcarra, a retired USAF colonel who flew 59 combat missions in the F-105 between 1964-66. 1966 was the year of the F-105s' heaviest losses, and Vizcarra himself was forced to eject over enemy territory during that time. Vizcarra got the idea for his book while attending an air show: "I was invited to attend the 'Legends and Heroes' tent at the fourth largest air show in the United States called 'Wings over Houston'. They like you to share some memorabilia and I was going to sell some prints, but my son saw that most people were selling autobiographies or books. He said, 'Dad, the idea of selling prints isn't good enough, you need to write a book for this event.' I had written a memoir for my family in 1998 about my war experience, so I used that as the basis of the book."

It is providential that Vizcarra's son persuaded his father to write a book because his account is a unique guide to F-105 combat over Vietnam. The book culminates in Vizcarra's ejection, but before then there are numerous accounts that vividly describe the danger of his missions. There are thrilling anecdotes of high velocities, dangerous runs on targets and anti-aircraft gunfire. Vizcarra also took part in the first counter-airstrike against surface-to-air missiles in the history of aerial warfare, and his memory of that event is a valuable resource for this military milestone.

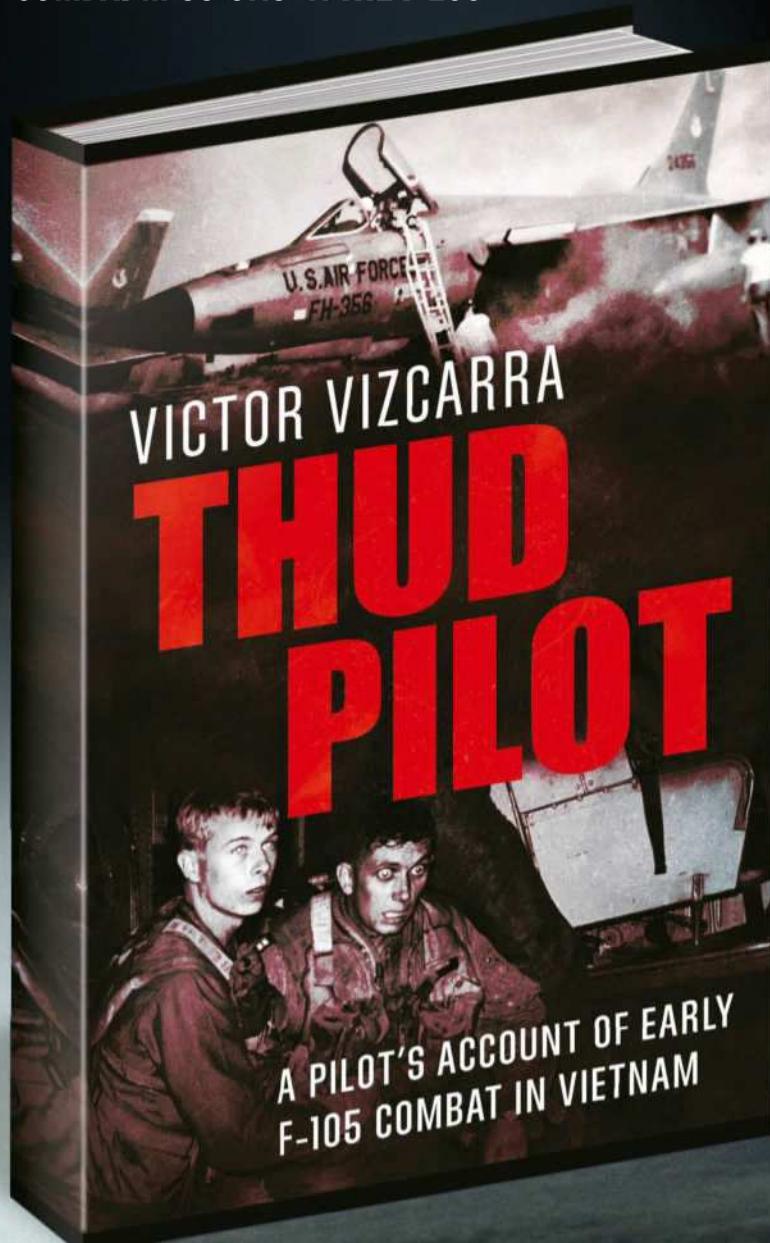
Thud Pilot is also blessed with a large number of personal photographs and accessible map drawings that depict mission routes from take-offs, refuelling orbits, targets and returns. These touches add an extra dimension to the book and give a sense of the scale of the missions that Vizcarra and his colleagues had to undertake.

Vizcarra's work is primarily personal, and he doesn't just describe his combat missions but also airbase life and even meeting Hollywood stars Bob Hope and Jill St. John. He is a generous author who gives much credit to the colleagues and family who experienced the war with him. In this regard, *Thud Pilot* is an immediately likeable work that portrays a modest but skilled airman who was pushed to the limits of aerial endurance, but who never lost his professionalism or humanity.

Vic Vizcarra
flew in F-105
Thunderchiefs,
which conducted
75 per cent
of bombing missions
over North Vietnam



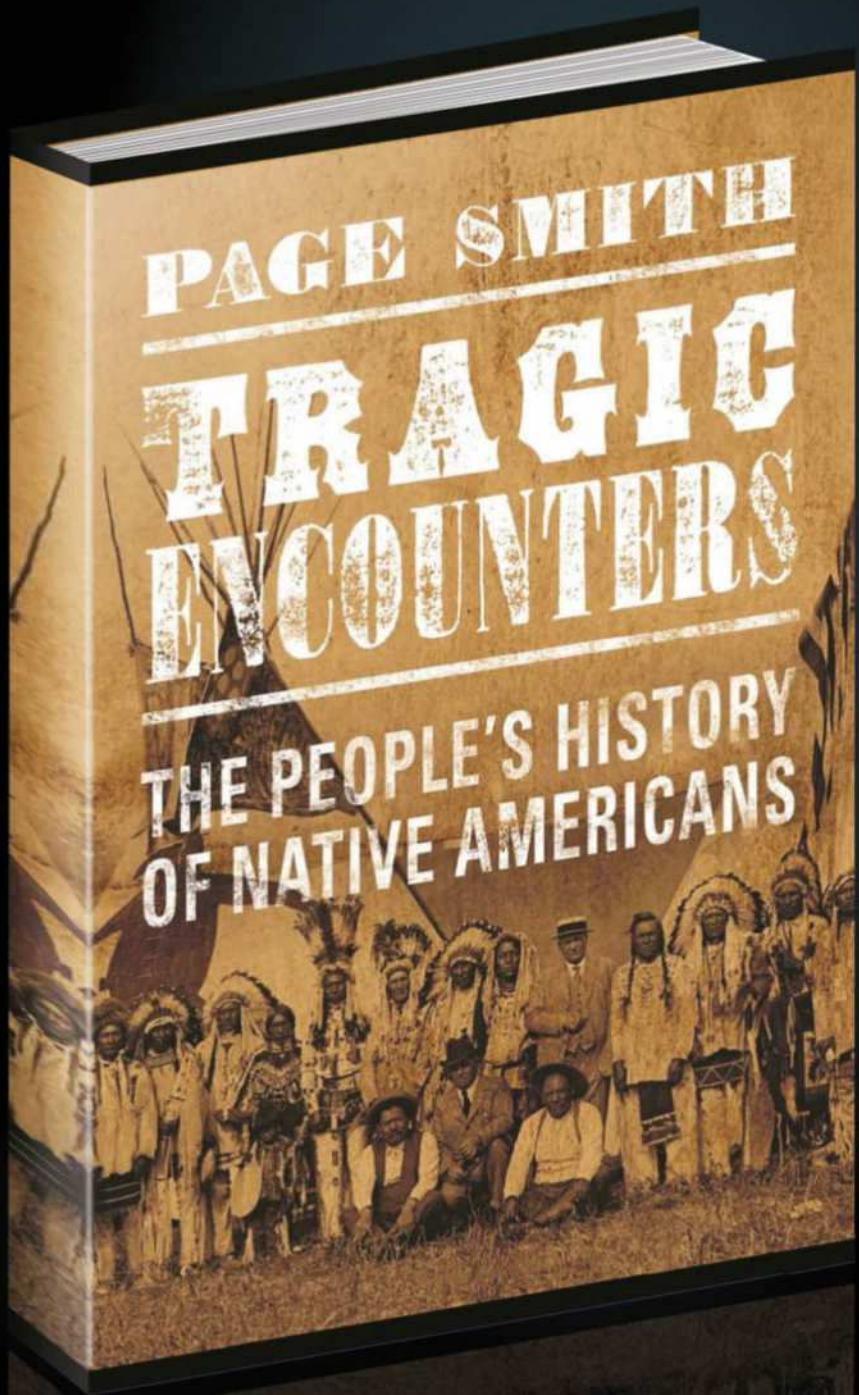
**THUD PILOT IS WRITTEN BY VIC VIZCARRA,
A RETIRED USAF COLONEL WHO FLEW 59
COMBAT MISSIONS IN THE F-105**



TRAGIC ENCOUNTERS

THE TRAGIC SAGA OF NATIVE AMERICANS AND EUROPEAN SETTLERS' WESTWARD EXPANSION IS TOLD WITH DRAMA AND AUTHORITY

Author: Page Smith **Publisher:** Amberley Publishing **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now



"TRIBAL HATREDS MADE COMMON ACTION AGAINST THE WHITES ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE, EXCEPT IN CERTAIN INSTANCES OF ALLIANCES, LIKE THE POWERFUL SIOUX AND THE CHEYENNE"

Page Smith needs no introduction to the majority of readers of American history. The author's monumental eight-volume account of the United States, from the earliest days to the 20th century, is a ground-breaking work composed of a continuous narrative loosely organised around the themes present in each age or period. Smith was the first modern historian to produce a full-scale treatise of America, which he titled a "people's history". The objective was to attach Americans to what he called "their antecedents, their roots".

Smith believed that academic history remained silent about the spiritual and moral dimension of events, and this belief transcended into his story of Native Americans, which he likewise defined as a "people's history". The manuscript of *Tragic Encounters* was only discovered after Smith's death in 1995, some three decades after the widespread 'rediscovery' of Native American cultures that took place in the 1960s.

The reasons for the sudden prominence of Native Americans, Smith claimed, was related to a reawakened environmental ethic and the need to love and preserve the land. He wrote, "Contributing to the elevation of the Indian is, doubtless, a kind of modern primitivism, a weariness with a world of technological wonders, a desire to return to a womb of innocence, to recapture the instinctual life of the natural man and woman."

Smith noted that the term 'Native American' is grounded in the historical fact that their presence on American soil long predates the arrival of the first European colonists. In the same breath, he emphasises the fact that, according to opinion polls, most Native Americans preferred the term 'Indian'.

The author pointed out that far from leading a bucolic existence, many tribes were in conflict with one another when Europeans set foot on the continent. With few exceptions, Native American cultures were based upon a perpetual state of war – even their newborn were dipped into cold water in the belief that this would set them on the path to becoming hardened warriors.

The European colonists committed a fateful, though almost inevitable, blunder by forging links with the tribes that inhabited their settlements: to befriend one tribe was to make inveterate enemies of its enemies. On the other hand, this could also work in the settlers' favour. Tribal hatreds made common action against the whites almost impossible, except in certain instances of alliances, like the powerful Sioux and the Cheyenne. It was common for Native Americans to join with settlers in hunting a common enemy.

It was not long before the settlers found themselves embroiled in pitched battles with the tribes, who rightly interpreted the Europeans' westward expansion as a blatant invasion. The most important theatre of military operations was in the area today known as the Midwest: battles raged continuously with the Shawnees and Cherokees.

More than three centuries of conflict, starting with the battles between the Powhatan Confederacy and the English colonists in the early 17th century, came to an end in 1924 with the Apache Wars west of the Mississippi. For Smith, this long period of warfare remains the most tragic saga in American history, with the exception of slavery. It is a tale told with authority and drama.

HITLER'S INSANITY

ANDREW NORMAN BRINGS HIS KNOWLEDGE AS AN AUTHOR AND PHYSICIAN TO CAST NEW LIGHT ON HITLER'S MENTAL DISORDERS

Author: Andrew Norman **Publisher:** Fonthill Media **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

Adolf Hitler continues to fascinate like no other tyrant in history. It is not that his reign of terror was any more repellent than the horrors perpetrated by the likes of Genghis Khan, Attila or, for that matter, the *führer*'s contemporary, Joseph Stalin. In the latter's case, Stalin's crimes failed to cause the same outrage because, on the one hand, the evils of Communism went ignored, when not denied, by the influential left-wing Western intelligentsia, along with the working classes who were led to believe in Communism as their defender against capitalist exploitation. The simple fact that the USSR was a crucial ally in the war against Nazism served to deflect attention from Stalin's genocidal acts. Another helpful factor in Stalin's favour was his avuncular demeanour, which belied a murderous character so patently conspicuous in Hitler's fiendish eyes.

Hitler was possessed of a hysterical mind and, unlike the shadowy Stalin, he made no attempt to conceal his demonic temperament. Those around him were only too aware they were dealing with a man given to loss of reason, one who at the snap of a finger could have them stood in front of an SS firing squad.

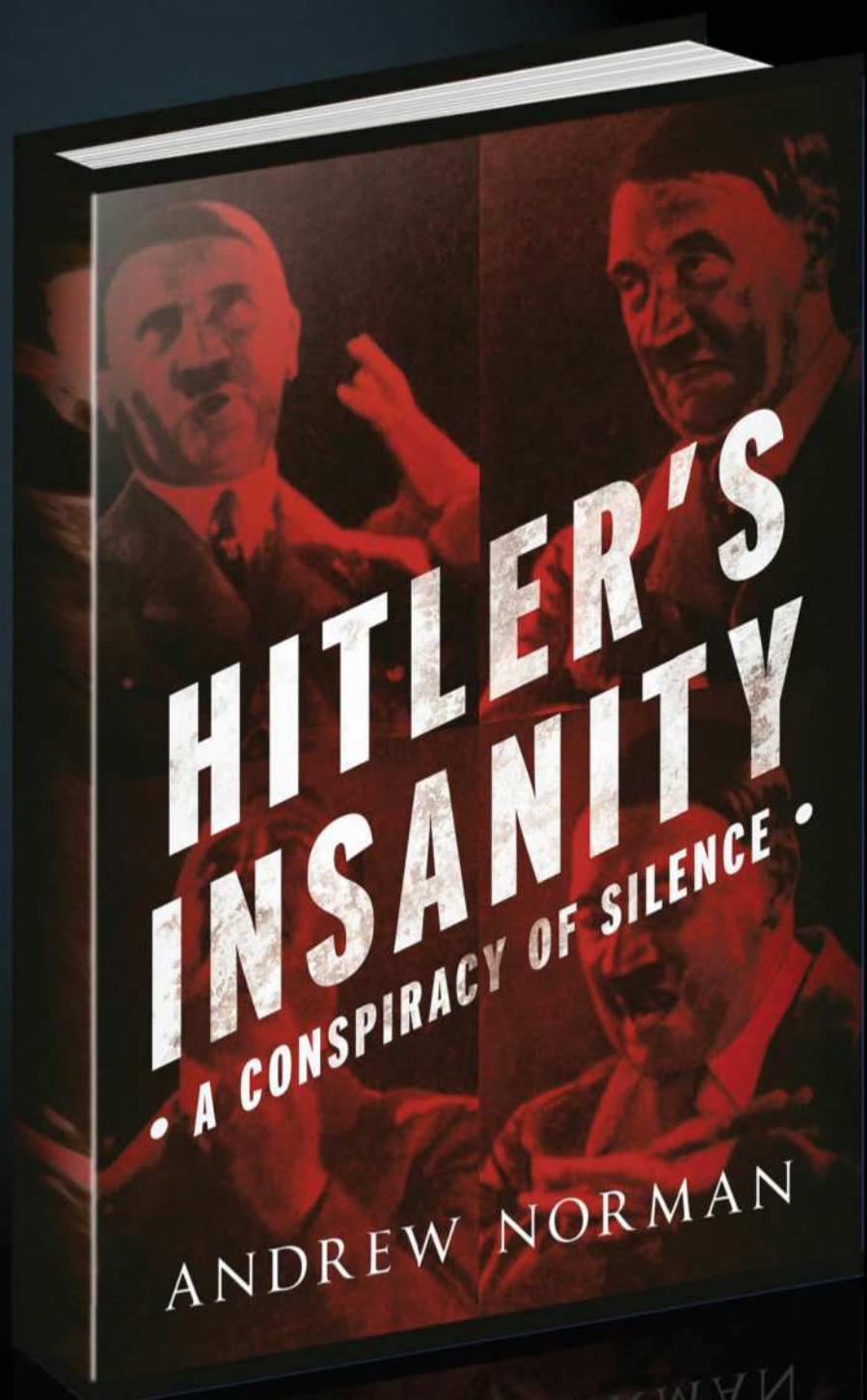
The madness of Hitler is masterfully revealed by Andrew Norman, who brings to his study the credentials of a trained physician as well as seasoned biographer. The author has drawn on testimonies of top Nazi leaders, many given at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Their chilling commentaries show how Hitler's henchmen were mesmerised by Hitler's powerful, deranged personality. Take, for instance, the remarks of Nazi foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, made shortly before he was hanged: "I was impressed with him [Hitler] from the moment I first met him, in 1932. He had terrific power, especially in his eyes. Hitler always, until the end, and even now, had a strange fascination over me."

Julius Streicher was one of the most sinister and vicious characters in Hitler's entourage. The Nazi propagandist and merciless anti-Semite likewise admitted to having been captivated by Hitler at their first encounter, when Streicher claimed to having experienced something "which transcended the commonplace". He heard an "inner voice", that bid him get up and introduce himself to this messianic speaker.

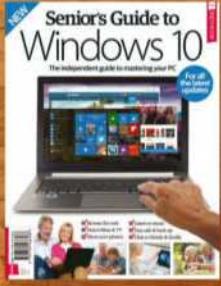
There is the intriguing question of what brought on Hitler's insanity. Eduard Bloch, the family's personal physician and ironically an Austrian Jew, was impressed by the young Hitler's almost obsessive devotion to his mother. Bloch described how Hitler's personality changed dramatically "and for the worse" after his mother's death.

August Kubizek, an acquaintance of Hitler's youth, believed that family intermarriage was a factor in his schizophrenia. While Norman casts doubt on the alleged inbreeding among Hitler's immediate forebears, there is evidence of hereditary schizophrenia. Syphilis arises as another likely factor in Hitler's mental degeneration. His personal physician, Theodor Morell, was certain the *führer* was in the final stages of the ailment and may even have suffered from Parkinson's Disease. "What the German people did not know about Hitler," Norman wrote, "was that the *Führer* heard voices, so-called command hallucinations." The author goes on to explain that Hitler would seek solitude in the woods, waiting for voices to speak and issue him his instructions.

That Hitler was mad is beyond doubt. What Norman brings to light is Hitler's own awareness of his mental disorder, and how his ailments hastened his decline, and with it the destruction of much of Europe.

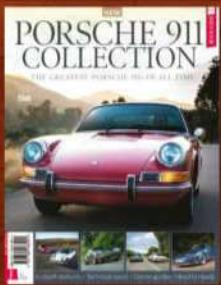
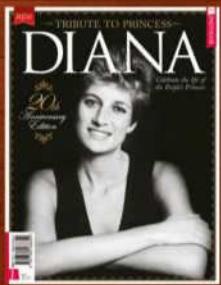
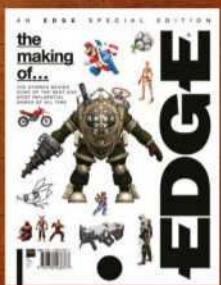
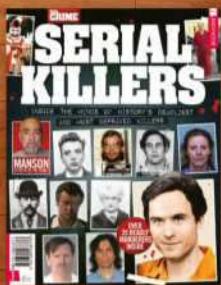
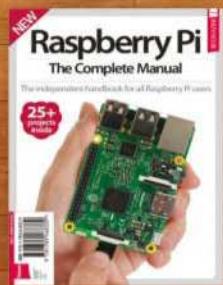


"THAT HITLER WAS MAD IS BEYOND DOUBT. WHAT NORMAN BRINGS TO LIGHT IS HITLER'S OWN AWARENESS OF HIS MENTAL DISORDER"



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HITLER'S SWITCHBOARD

This unusual telephone exchange comes from the Nazi leader's 'Wolf's Lair' and contains direct lines to some of the most evil figures in history

Below and far right: Heinrich Himmler was only one of several high-ranking Nazis that could be directly contacted through this switchboard



Right: This section of a telephone exchange switchboard was used in Hitler's headquarters at a fortified complex near Rastenburg in East Prussia



Images: National Army Museum

"HITLER HELD CONFERENCES AND COORDINATED MAJOR OPERATIONS ON THE EASTERN FRONT FROM A WINDOWLESS BUNKER IN THE WOLF'S LAIR"

The 'Wolf's Lair' was the nickname for Adolf Hitler's Supreme Command Headquarters, which was located near Rastenburg in East Prussia (now Poland). The complex was one of several Führerhauptquartiere (Führer Headquarters) that were built in parts of Eastern Europe for the start of Operation Barbarossa in 1941, but the Rastenburg site was Hitler's favourite. The Nazi leader spent over 800 days at the Wolf's

Lair and over 2,000 military staff, guards and support personnel worked there.

The headquarters was located in dense woodland, which provided effective camouflage from aerial reconnaissance, and consisted of bunkers that were fortified with barbed wire and 50,000 mines. Despite its formidable fortifications, the site was the scene of the failed '20 July Plot' (commonly known as 'Operation Valkyrie') in 1944 to assassinate Hitler. The Wolf's Lair was ultimately abandoned

in November 1944 when Soviet troops approached East Prussia.

Hitler held conferences and coordinated operations on the Eastern Front from a windowless bunker in the Wolf's Lair, and could easily access his headquarters from a railway line in the middle of the site. To keep in touch with his high-ranking subordinates, Hitler also had a sophisticated telephone exchange that included this pictured switchboard. Although the switchboard is incomplete, it includes infamous war criminals from the Nazi military forces, including Hermann Göring (head of the Luftwaffe), Heinrich Himmler (head of the SS), Martin Bormann (head of the Nazi Party Chancellery), Alfred Jodl (chief-of-staff of the Wehrmacht) and Wilhelm Keitel (commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces High Command).

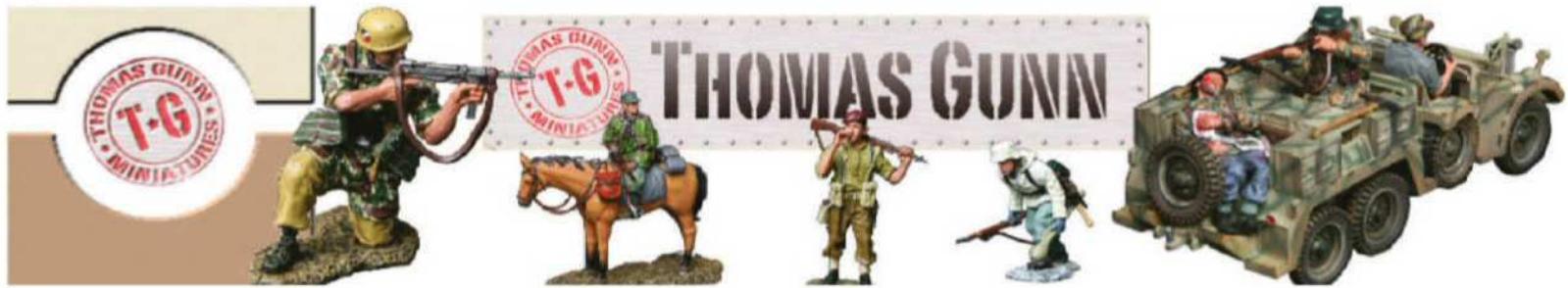


The conference room in the Wolf's Lair was the scene of the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler and instigate a military coup d'état on 20 July 1944

**NATIONAL
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The Wolf's Lair switchboard is on display at the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. The museum is open daily from 10.30am-5.30pm (8pm on the first Wednesday of every month).

For more information visit: www.nam.ac.uk



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